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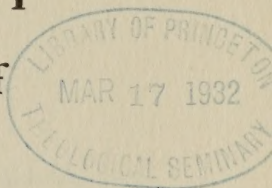
Section .591

INDIVIDUALISM AND
INDIVIDUALITY

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INDIVIDUALISM AND INDIVIDUALITY

In the Philosophy of
John Stuart Mill




By
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With an appendix of Mill's Review of
G. C. Lewis' "Use and Abuse of Political Terms"

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Preface

The material which goes to make up this book has been accumulated during a number of years of interest in Mill's life and writings. Even in our own time, with its increasing historical perspective, Mill continues to be thought of primarily as an exponent of utilitarianism, the association psychology, "classical" economic theory, and various brands of political reform. It seems worth while to emphasize his warm and winning personality, and to show that underlying all his interest in economic and social reform was a predominant interest in the development of individuality as the only satisfactory basis for social life.

In the business of writing this essay Professor Herbert C. Schneider of Columbia University has given generously of his time and interest. Grateful acknowledgment is due also to Professors John Dewey, Emery Neff, and R. G. Tugwell for valuable criticism and suggestions. To Professor Dickinson S. Miller, formerly of Columbia University and the General Theological Seminary, now of Smith College, an ardent admirer of John Stuart Mill, I owe a debt of gratitude that I cannot well express.

C. L. S.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH HOUSE
AT THE
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Chapter I.

Introduction.

"Everyone who wants to see our nation well governed," says Ex-president Hadley of Yale University in a recent volume of lectures entitled *Liberty and Equality*, "is crying out for some new issue on which parties shall be organized and by which American politics may be rescued from the chaos into which they have fallen. The one issue big enough for the purpose—big enough to transcend the appeal of business interest or class feeling or local prejudice—is the issue between liberty and equality; the relative importance from the standpoint of the nation of allowing our citizens to develop their own powers in their own way—the claim of liberty—or of having all citizens given opportunities as nearly equal as possible for the pursuit of happiness—the claim of social justice. The man who has studied the history of liberty and equality and has thought out the lessons of that history is likely to have the same advantage over the mere opportunist in dealing with the politics of the next twenty years that Lincoln had in his day over those who thought that the slavery question could be settled by expedients like the Kansas-Nebraska Bill or doctrines like that of squatter sovereignty." ¹

The issue that Ex-president Hadley indicates is one that has appeared in many different forms and many different places. It is to be seen not only in the conflict between liberty

¹ A. T. Hadley, *Liberty and Equality*, pp. 1-2.

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and equality, but with a little different emphasis in the conflict between individualism and collectivism, and between liberalism and socialism as economic programs. It has a close relation to the conflict between freedom and authority. In the nineteenth century, both in England and in our own country, both these sets of tendencies have at different times loudly proclaimed themselves on the side of youth and progress. When we examine the course of forward-looking opinion, we seem to see in it two currents. One is represented by the type of individual who looks about on the inefficiency and lack of organization, the waste of effort and of life that surround him, and says, "What is needed is more intelligence, more direction by experts of the lives of this roiling mass which is humanity, direction by experts who are versed in the ways of government, and who, if they were given a free hand, could lead mankind into the paths of prosperity and peace." The other class is represented by the individual who says, "Man's greatest heritage is freedom; it is better to be poor and ignorant and dirty, than to be taught and washed and made prosperous by the despotism of others, however benevolent that despotism may be." These two types of attitude may be seen more or less clearly opposed to one another in almost all the controversies that trouble mankind, in politics, national and international, in the Church, and in the family. Whether it be the League of Nations, Prohibition, Marriage and Divorce, or any one of a thousand other questions, sooner or later the parties to the controversy find themselves gravitating toward this distinction. One group cries "Personal liberty," "Individual freedom," "National sovereignty" (as opposed to Leagues of Nations and World Courts). The other group cries "Efficiency," "Organization," or "Combination for mutual benefit." Both of these points of view may be philosophies of progress—both, that is, may be opposed to that sort of unreflective conservatism that sees danger in any departure from the *status quo*. But at

different times each of them has been pressed into service as an argument for conservatism, as at other times each has been the battle cry of reform.

As we study concrete social situations now it seems obvious enough that these are not two principles eternal in themselves and eternally and unalterably set over against one another, but rather attitudes of mind, points of view, ideas about ways of getting things done (in part ideas about what things are worth doing), which must be brought together in judicious combination if a progressively more satisfactory social state of things is to be achieved. But there are still people who fail to see this, who declare themselves unqualifiedly as Socialists, or Individualists, or Liberals, with some echo of the old meaning, or, if they be more philosophically inclined, try to find a solution of this "problem" in general terms. They take the names of tendencies or movements that have grown up in specific historical situations, spell them with capitals, and put them behind historical events as *dei ex machina*. Then they spend the rest of their lives trying to solve the problem which the hypostatization of these general terms has created. Ex-president Hadley would seem to be one of these people. And the inconclusiveness of the volume of lectures from which the foregoing quotation is taken would suggest that there is something unreal about his problem or wrong with his method.

But Ex-president Hadley is eternally right when he emphasizes the importance of historical investigation as a preliminary to intelligent dealing with present day problems. And if, following his suggestion, we were to study the "history of liberty and equality," we could find no more significant period upon which to center our efforts than England during the middle fifty years of the last century. And we could find no better individual upon whom to direct our attention than John Stuart Mill. In his life and his writing the problem of the relation of the individual to the social

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group seems to focus itself uniquely. But when we turn to the consideration of Mill's philosophy, this same danger confronts us—of creating artificial problems and then trying vainly to find an answer. Many of the studies of John Stuart Mill that have been made in the past have fallen into this error. Critics start with categories of their own and try to fit the thinkers of past years into those categories, in place of starting the other way around and asking what concretely a given individual's problems were, and how, in his own terms, he tried to solve them. On the one hand it has been customary to think of John Stuart Mill as the inheritor from Jeremy Bentham and James Mill of the leadership of the forces of social and economic liberalism. But on the other hand we find in his writings much that seems to be the very opposite of this liberalism and of the individualism on which it was based. Leslie Stephen says that the latter part of his life Mill was "well on the way to State Socialism."² Mill looked with favor upon the plan of operation by the government of railroads and other industries that had to be carried on on a large scale.³ In the *Autobiography* he says: "I shall look forward to the time when the rule that they who do not work shall not eat will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all; and when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, in so great a degree as it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice." Having this ideal, he "regarded all existing institutions and social arrangements as merely provisional, and welcomed with the greatest pleasure and interest all Socialistic experiments by select individuals."⁴

So we find a perplexing inconsistency in Mill's social

² Leslie Stephen, *English Utilitarians*, Vol. III. p. 230.

³ J. S. Mill, *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 190.

⁴ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography* (Columbia University Press, 1925) pp. 162, 164.

philosophy if we ask whether he favored economic liberalism or socialism, or try to place him arbitrarily in the conflict between "individualism" and "collectivism" which was going on in England during those years. But this question and others like it perplex because they are based on false assumptions. As far as John Stuart Mill is concerned, an analysis of social philosophy in England in the nineteenth century in terms of individualism and collectivism does not help very much. Mill himself did not think of the problems he was up against in these terms. He did not allow his attitude to be determined by "'isms." He maintained, to be sure, a certain loyalty to the Utilitarian tradition, even though in developing it and redefining it he made some radical changes. There were other Utilitarians, the Grotes and Francis Place among them, who looked askance at what they considered his heterodoxy. And when Mill speaks of "Utilitarianism as understood by its best teachers" as holding this or that doctrine, we must confess to a suspicion that the circle of these "best teachers" is pretty much confined to Mill himself. But the truth of the matter is that Mill's real interest was in solving certain problems which presented themselves to him. He cared more about that than he did about the label that his particular solution might wear.

And yet, from our point of view, looking back over the development of English thought during the last hundred years, there can be seen a very definite line of development running through the thought of the early Utilitarians, and their youthful champion of the second generation. The connecting link in this development is in the idea of the individual. Individualism is as much the key to John Stuart Mill's social philosophy as it is to the philosophy of his teachers. Only—and this is the important point—John Stuart Mill's individualism was a different sort of individualism. It was fuller and richer, and laid more emphasis on the inner development of the individual. The purpose of this book is not to

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place Mill with regard to certain schools of thought or to try to show his relation to a hypothetical conflict between the principles of liberty and equality, or individualism and socialism. It is rather to ask what were Mill's own concrete problems?—how did he see them?—how, in his own terms, did he attempt to solve them? Its thesis is that the expanding idea of individuality, and a growing concern for individuality in society (which was directly related to his own growing personality) played an important part in Mill's thought and is essential to the understanding of his social and political philosophy.

Chapter II.

The Individualism of the Early Utilitarians.

I.

The early Utilitarians had much to say about "the individual." But for them the individual was an abstraction. Jeremy Bentham and James Mill were not interested at all in real *individuals* or individuality. Bentham was looking for a philosophy of legal reform and for a safe and business-like government. James Mill was looking for general principles on which an objective science of government and economics and psychology might be based. Bowring's remark that "the further men wander from simplicity the further they are from truth" is typical of their point of view.¹ For method they turned to the sciences. Mathematics, physics, and astronomy were their chief guides. They used the method that had proved so fruitful in these fields, namely that of trying to explain complex phenomena in terms of the simple behaviour of simple units, regarded as being practically alike and having their relation to each other determined by a few simple laws. It was this method that had shown its value in chemistry in the shape of the atomic theory. And it is significant that Bentham had studied chemistry under For-dyce, and James Mill was a friend of Thomas Thompson.

This was James Mill's approach to psychology, where the atoms were ideas, connected by the laws of association.

¹ Caroline Fox, *Memoirs of Old Friends*, p. 24.

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Says James Mill at the beginning of the *Analysis of the Human Mind*:

"Philosophical inquiries into the human mind have for their main and ultimate object, the exposition of its more complex phenomena.

"It is necessary, however, that the simple should be premised because they are the elements of which the complex are formed; and because a distinct knowledge of the elements is indispensable to an accurate conception of that which is compounded of them."²

Their social inquiry was characterized by the same method. Here, again, they tried to explain complex phenomena in terms of simple units, connected by simple laws. The atom here was the "individual." But they were not particularly interested in the individuals they met on the street. "The individual" was for them simply the atom in their social chemistry, the "element" out of which the "complex" is formed. He was an abstraction convenient for the purposes of explanation.

One illustration from Bentham will be sufficient to show his use of the idea of the individual. In his discussion of equality, he tries to demonstrate the advantage of equality of possessions. He lays down five propositions:

(1) "Each portion of wealth is connected with a corresponding portion of human happiness."

(2) "Of two individuals possessed of unequal fortunes, he who possesses greatest wealth will possess greatest happiness."

(3) "The excess of happiness on the part of the most wealthy will not be so great as the excess of his wealth."

(4) "For the same reason, the greater the disproportion between the two masses of wealth, the less the probability that there exists an equal disproportion between the masses of happiness."

(5) "The more nearly the actual proportion approaches to equality, the greater will be the total mass of happiness."³

² James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, Vol. I. p. 1.

³ Jeremy Bentham, *Works*, Vol. I. p. 305.

We have here no suspicion that the happiness may depend partly on the individual characteristics of the "individuals." For the purposes of his argument he had to take his "individuals" in the mass, and to regard them to all intents and purposes as being exactly alike.

Furthermore these atoms are regarded as being connected by simple types of relationship. And this brings us to the second important postulate of the early Utilitarians. They went on the assumption that individuals are animated in all their actions by self-interest. Where the justification for this doctrine came from, it is fairly easy to see. Take the case of Bentham, who was a very altruistic and good natured person. In his efforts for the reform of the law and his other projects (his scheme for a model prison for one), he started out with the idea that everybody was like himself, and that people would only have to be shown a better way of doing things in order to adopt the better way. But he met with opposition all down the line. He came to feel that his chief enemy was not ignorance, but organized vested interests opposed to reform. The blind admiration of the *status quo* exhibited by Blackstone and Lord Eldon, the information James Mill gave him on the art of packing juries, his own experiences in dealing with king and parliament—such things convinced him that there was a great conspiracy on the part of the "sinister interests" against enlightenment and reform. "Judge and Co." was the name which he and his followers gave to the combination of the government and the lawyers and the judges. The Church, and the vested rights it protected, he called "Jug," short for "Juggernaut." The failure of the panoptican scheme and the refusal of the government to repay the money which he had advanced in good faith to buy a site for his model prison made him particularly bitter. The people he had to deal with were out, he found, each man for himself. Self-interest, conceived as a universal motive, seemed to explain their actions

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very well. James Mill, also a reformer up against wickedness in high places, was impressed by the same thing. Hence this important doctrine of the utilitarian psychology. It was useful as a psychological principle; it simplified explanation because it gave one universal motive in place of many different motives; and the Utilitarians found it unpleasantly and persistently true in their experience. It came to be a central element, not only in their psychology, but in their economic and political theory.

But in spite of this theoretical individualism, and in spite of their zeal for reform, the Utilitarians had no real interest in individuals as individuals. With interest in personality there has always seemed to go a certain warmth and freedom and enthusiasm, and this the Utilitarians studiously avoided. There was no warmth and fire about them. John Stuart Mill says of his father:

"For passionate emotions of all sorts, and for everything which has been said or written in exaltation of them, he professed the greatest contempt. He regarded them as a form of madness. 'The intense' was with him a bye-word of scornful disapprobation."⁴

With this there seems to have gone a certain coldness and aloofness in dealing with other people. Place, who had been seeing much of Mill and his family, writes of him in his diary, "He could help the mass, but he could not help the individual, not even himself or his own."⁵ What interest they had in liberty had nothing to do with the development of personality. Liberty had an insignificant place in Bentham's system. For the happiness of the body politic, he says, are necessary "subsistence, abundance, equality, and security." Liberty is a "branch of security; personal liberty is security against a certain species of injury which affects the person, political liberty is security against injustice of members of

⁴ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 49.

⁵ Graham Wallas, *Life of Place*, p. 79.

the government.”⁶ To be able to look ahead and count on the future with some degree of confidence, is essential if people are to be industrious, thrifty, and saving, and if commerce is to be possible. In order to bring about security, the Government creates rights, which it confers upon individuals.

“To these rights correspond offenses of all classes. The law cannot create rights without creating the corresponding obligations. It cannot create rights and obligations without creating offenses. It can neither command nor prohibit without restraining the liberty of individuals. The citizen, therefore, cannot acquire any right without sacrificing part of his liberty.”⁷

“Every law is contrary to liberty.”⁸

“All government is only a tissue of sacrifices.”⁹

II.

It was in this tradition that John Stuart Mill was brought up. His father and Jeremy Bentham set themselves to educate him in such a way that, as Mill wrote Bentham, “we may perhaps leave him a successor worthy of both of us.” The story of this schooling is familiar and need not be recounted here. After a strenuous course of study with his father at home, the younger Mill, at the age of fourteen, went to spend fourteen months with Sir Samuel Bentham, brother of Jeremy, in Southern France. He came back to England in July, 1821. The following year he read the story of the French Revolution and also Bentham’s philosophy in the shape of Dumont’s *Traité de Législation*. The reading of these books came at a critical time, and taken together had a powerful effect on his imagination. The story of the French Revolution filled him with zeal for the Revolutionary cause, and Bentham’s work seemed to give him

⁶ Bentham, *Works*, Vol. I. p. 302.

⁷ Bentham, *Works*, p. 302.

⁸ Bentham, *Works*, p. 301.

⁹ Bentham, *Works*, p. 313.

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precisely what was needed on the positive side, the basis for a program of reform. Says Mill:

"When I laid down the last volume of the *Traité* I had become a different being. The 'principle of utility' understood as Bentham understood it, and applied in the manner in which he applied it through these three volumes, fell exactly into its place as the keystone which held together the detached and fragmentary component parts of my knowledge and beliefs. It gave unity to my conceptions of things. I now had opinions; a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among the best senses of the word, a religion; the inculcation and diffusion of which could be made the principal outward purpose of a life. And I had a grand conception laid before me of changes to be effected in the condition of mankind through that doctrine."

He had an "object in life." It was to be a "reformer of the world."¹⁰

In March, 1824, appeared the first number of the *Westminster Review*, the hope and the despair of the Benthamites. It contained, among other articles, James Mill's attack on the *Edinburgh Review*. In the second number John Stuart Mill tries his weapons against the same enemy. This article, and those that immediately follow it, are characterized by an uncompromising, uncritical, and juvenile Benthamism, coupled with a merciless attack on the weak points of the adversaries of Utilitarianism. Writing of this period of his life in the *Autobiography*, after summing up the opinions of James Mill and his friends, John Stuart Mill says:

"These various opinions were seized on with youthful fanaticism by the little knot of young men of whom I was one; and we put into them a sectarian spirit, from which, in intention at least, my father was wholly free. . . . Ambition and desire of distinction I had in abundance; and zeal for what I thought the good of mankind was my strongest sentiment, mixing with and colouring all others. But my zeal was as yet little else, at that period of my life, than zeal for speculative opinions. It had not its root in genuine benevolence, or sympathy with mankind;

¹⁰ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 93.

though these qualities held their due place in my ethical standard.”¹¹

Ample illustrations of this are found in the early *Westminster Review* articles. Hear, for example, the Mill of these years on “Liberty,” in the above mentioned article on the *Edinburgh Review*:

“Liberty, another favourite word with the *Edinburgh Review*, is equally suited with the word ‘constitution,’ to the ends of compromise. Liberty, in its original sense, means freedom from restraint. In this sense, every law, and every rule of morals, is contrary to liberty. A despot, who is entirely emancipated from both, is the only person whose freedom of action is complete. A measure of government, therefore, is not necessarily bad, because it is contrary to liberty; and to blame it for that reason, leads to confusion of ideas. But to create confusion of ideas, is essential to the purpose of those who have to persuade the people, that small abuses should be reformed, while great ones should remain untouched.”¹²

He had a typical early Utilitarian faith in the education of the masses as the road to social well-being:

“The attention of those who wish to see an amelioration in the condition of the great mass of mankind ought henceforth to be mainly directed to the means of communicating to *all* that which is now known only to a *few*. The principal difficulty is overcome—the road to happiness is discovered—no groping, no perplexing research, no hopeless, thankless toil is required—all that remains to be done is, to remove the obstacles which conceal that road from the view of those who are less fortunate than ourselves.”¹³

Again, in discussing an explanation in an article in the *Edinburgh Review* as to why the poor stopped sending their children to the Westminster Infant School where the payment of three pence a week was required, he says:

“But if he (the author of this article) means to insinuate that they refrain from sending their children to the school because

¹¹ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 76-7.

¹² *Westminster Review*, Vol. 1. p. 509.

¹³ *Westminster Review*, Vol. 4. p. 89.

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they suspect the motives of the gentlemen who set it on foot, the absurdity is so palpable as scarcely to need a refutation. The idea that anyone, in determining whether he will avail himself of a proffered benefit, is influenced by any other considerations than, first whether it is really a benefit, and secondly, whether the cost does not exceed the advantage, almost provokes a laugh."¹⁴

In the fourth number of the *Westminster Mill* has a review of a book on English History, by George Brodie. The review is largely an attack on Hume as an historian, and shows the young champion of Benthamism at his fiercest:

"Hume possessed powers of a very high order; but regard for truth formed no part of his character. . . . Hume may very possibly have been sincere. He may, perhaps, have been weak enough to believe that the pleasures and pains of one individual are of unspeakable importance, those of the many of no importance at all. But though it be possible to defend Charles I, and be an honest man, it is not possible to be an honest man, and defend him as Hume has done.

"A skillful advocate will never tell a lie, when suppressing the truth will answer his purpose; and if a lie must be told, he will rather, if he can, lie by insinuation than by direct assertion. In all the arts of a rhetorician, Hume was a master; and it would be a vain attempt to describe the systematic suppression of the truth which is exemplified in this portion of his history; and which, within the sphere of our reading, we have scarcely, if ever, seen matched. Particular instances of this species of mendacity, Mr. Brodie has brought to light in abundance."¹⁵

In 1825 Bentham asked the younger Mill to undertake the task of preparing for the press his notes on Evidence, which finally appeared in five volumes on the *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*. This work not only gave its editor considerable knowledge of English law, but had a marked influence on Mill's own style. The *Westminster Review* articles of 1825, 1826, and 1827 show an increasing maturity of thought and structure.

¹⁴ *Westminster Review*, Vol. I. p. 520.

¹⁵ Quoted by Bain, John Stuart Mill, p. 34.

III.

John Stuart Mill in the nature of the case could not, and, as a matter of fact, did not, remain very long satisfied with the system of ideas he had been defending so vociferously. A broadening-out process began very soon. It can be seen in the story of Mill's inner experience during these years, and in the story of his friendships. Of the inner experiences that went with his developing point of view, Mill provides a detailed account in the *Autobiography* in the chapter on the "Mental Crisis." In his own words, he was in a "dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times becomes insipid or indifferent." It occurred to him to ask himself whether if "all the changes in institutions and opinions" which he had been looking forward to were realized, he would be really happy. "And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered 'No'."

He says:

"At this my heart sank within me; the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for."¹⁶

Mill goes on to give at some length his theory of the cause of this melancholy episode. His account must not be taken uncritically. It was written a long time after, and is in terms of his father's psychology. But it is true in general that Mill's later accounts of his earlier mental processes as given in the *Autobiography*, are pretty accurate. And his account of the mental crises, however untrue it may be as a matter of fact, may, at least, be accepted as a trustworthy

¹⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 94.

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statement of what Mill thought was the trouble with him at the time. He had been brought up to believe that

"all mental and moral feelings and qualities, whether of a good or bad kind, were the results of association."

"We love one thing, and hate another, take pleasure in one sort of action or contemplation and pain in another sort, through the clinging of pleasurable or painful ideas to those things, from the effect of education or of experience. As a corollary from this," he says, "I had always heard it maintained by my father, and was myself convinced, that the object of education should be to form the strongest possible associations of the salutary class; associations of pleasure with all things beneficial to the great whole, and of pain with all things hurtful to it."

But now he made the discovery that the "habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings." If, for instance, you know that your feeling of pleasure over work well done is just the result of the long habit of associating work well done with the pleasure of praise and reward, there is a danger that the association between pleasure and work well done will be broken down. Thus Mill goes on to say, analytical habits are a

"perpetual worm at the root both of the passions and of the virtues; and, above all, fearfully undermine all desires, and all pleasures, which are the effects of association, that is, according to the theory I held, all except the purely physical and organic; of the entire insufficiency of which to make life desirable, no one had a stronger conviction than I had."¹⁷

It seemed to him that his father had taught him habits of analysis before these valuable associations had had time to become sufficiently strongly cemented:

"I was thus, as I said to myself, left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for; no delight in virtue, or the general good, but also just as little in anything else. The

¹⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 96-7.

fountains of vanity and ambition seemed to have dried up within me, as completely as those of benevolence."

"Neither selfish nor unselfish pleasures were pleasures to me. And there seemed no power in nature sufficient to begin the formation of my character anew, and create in a mind now irretrievably analytic, fresh associations of pleasure with any of the objects of human desire. . . . These were the thoughts which mingled with the dry heavy dejection of the melancholy winter of 1826-7."¹⁸

With the Spring of 1827 came some relief. Mill was reading Marmontel's *Memoirs*, and came upon the passage where Marmontel, still a boy, comforted his family on the occasion of his father's death by telling them that he would take his father's place. Mill says:

"a vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears. From this moment my burden grew lighter. The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me, was gone. I was no longer hopeless; I was not a stock or a stone. I had still, it seemed, some of the material out of which all worth of character, and all capacity for happiness, are made."

The importance of this episode is not so much that Mill was inspired by the example of the young Marmontel, as that he found that he could be moved to tears. He was not a stock or a stone. He was not a machine governed by reason and with pleasures "purely physical and organic" for motive power. He had honestly thought that he was. He had taken the doctrine of Bentham and his father literally, and found that it did not work. This is what makes the mental crisis so important in the development of his thought.

It was at this time that he began to read Wordsworth. And in Wordsworth's portrayal of objects of natural beauty, in his appeal to the finer sensibilities, Mill found a medicine for his unhappy state of mind. He discovered that there was "real permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation."

He tells us that this experience had two marked effects

¹⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 98.

upon his "opinion and character." In the first place, it convinced him that happiness was to be found not by seeking happiness, but by "aiming at something else"; and in the second place, he now saw the importance of the "internal culture of the individual."¹⁹ But more important still, or perhaps underlying these two conclusions, was the discovery that associations of pleasure and pain with acts that are socially valuable are not purely artificial and arbitrary, but have, as Mill says in a passage in *Utilitarianism* which we will quote again before the end of this paper, "a firm foundation" in a "powerful natural sentiment"—"the social feelings of mankind." The habit of analysis in Mill's case had done its worst, but had not succeeded in entirely wiping out the feeling side of his nature after all.

So much for Mill's own story. But there were other causes for his trouble which he does not take into account. The trouble was partly physical, a matter of overwork with which the editing of Bentham on Evidence must have had not a little to do, and this was complicated by the spiritual readjustment involved when Mill began to find out that the scheme of salvation for the world which had seemed so completely satisfactory wasn't so satisfactory after all. He had simply been juggling a lot of technical terms—individual, happiness, liberty, democracy. Now he was beginning to want to know what they meant. He was discovering that "groping, perplexing research, hopeless, thankless toil," was going to be required after all. He had to start out on an exploring expedition of his own, which involved at the start great hospitality to new points of view very different from the traditional Utilitarian philosophy, new friendships, new experiences. The story of his intellectual development is the story of his attempt to adapt the philosophy of his early years to the life and thought of a new age.

¹⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 100.

Chapter III.

Some Important Friendships.

I.

Writing to Carlyle in 1834, Mill mentions a review in an "early number of *Tait*" (1832 to be exact) which shows the change that had taken place in his point of view. "It was," Mill says in his letter to Carlyle, "the truest paper I had ever written, for it was the most completely an out-growth of my own mind and character; not that what is there taught was the best I even then had to teach, nor perhaps did I even think it so, but it contained what was uppermost in me at that time, and differed from most also that I knew in having emanated from me, not, with more or less perfect assimilation, merely worked itself into me."¹

It is hardly possible to imagine a greater contrast between the author of this review and the cocksure young prodigy who wrote the article on the *Edinburgh Magazine* and the review of Brodie's *History of England* four or five years before. The article is a kind of confession. It is his own early sins that Mill is declaiming against. The book reviewed is the *Use and Abuse of Political Terms* by G. C. Lewis. As the title indicates, it is a criticism of the use of certain political terms (as Right, State of Nature, Liberty, Force) by political writers of the time, with a view to arriving at clear concepts and a common understanding of the things

¹ J. S. Mill, *Letters*, Vol. I. p. 89. This review will be found reprinted in full as an appendix to this dissertation.

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for which these terms stand. As might be expected, Mill applauds Mr. Lewis' aim, though in many cases he disagrees with his specific conclusion. But the part of the review that is most interesting has only casual reference to Mr. Lewis' book.

"Mankind," Mill says, "have many ideas, and but few words. This truth should never be absent from the mind of one who takes upon him to decide if another man's language is philosophical or the reverse. Two consequences follow from it; one, that a certain laxity in the use of language must be borne with, if a writer makes himself understood; the other, that, to understand a writer who is obliged to use the same words as a vehicle for different ideas, requires a vigorous effort of co-operation on the part of the reader."

And again;

"It shall be recollected, too, that many a man has a mind teeming with important thoughts, who is quite incapable of putting them into words which shall not be liable to any metaphysical objection; that when this is the case, the logical incoherence or incongruity of the expression is commonly the very first thing which strikes the mind, and that which there is least merit in perceiving. The man of superior intellect, in that case, is not he who can only see that the proposition precisely as stated is not true; but he who, not overlooking the incorrectness at the surface, does, nevertheless, discern that there is truth at the bottom."

The review closes with the following paragraph:

"We have often thought that a really philosophical Treatise on the Ambiguities of the Moral Sciences would be one of the most valuable scientific contributions which a man of first-rate intellectual ability could confer upon his age, and upon posterity. But it would not be so much a book of criticism as of inquiry. Its main end would be, not to set people right in their use of words, which you never can be qualified to do, so long as their thoughts, on the subject treated of, are in any way different from yours; but to get at their thoughts through their words, and to see what sort of a view of truth can be got, by looking at it in their way. It would be seen, then, how multifarious are the properties and distinctions to be marked, and how few the words to

mark them with, so that one word is sometimes all we have to denote a dozen different ideas, and that men go wrong less often than Mr. Lewis supposes, from using a word in many senses, but more frequently from using it only in one, the distinctions which it serves to mark in its other acceptations not being adverted to at all. Such a book would enable all kinds of thinkers, who are now at daggers-drawn, because they are speaking different dialects and know it not, to understand one another, and to perceive that, with the proper explanations, their doctrines are reconcilable; and would unite all the exclusive and one-sided systems, so long the bane of true philosophy, by placing before each man a more comprehensive view, in which the whole of what is affirmative in his own view would be included."

"This is the larger and nobler design which Mr. Lewis should set before himself, and which, we believe, his abilities to be equal to did he but feel that this is the only task worthy of them. He might thus contribute a large part to what is probably destined to be the great philosophical achievement of the era, of which many signs already announce the commencement; viz., to unite all half-truths which have been fighting against one another ever since the creation, and blend them in one harmonious whole." ²

This is Mill writing in his finest spirit. The desire for fairness, the eagerness to understand points of view different from his own, is doubly significant when we recall his violent sectarianism of a few years before. He became, as he says in the *Autobiography*, "catholic and tolerant to an extreme degree." Goethe's device, "manysidedness," was one which he would most willingly have taken for his own. And the confidence here expressed that it would be possible by clear and sympathetic thinking to "unite all exclusive and one-sided systems" in a more comprehensive view is a key to much of Mill's activity during the following years. The *Logic* was Mill's attempt to supply a treatise on the ambiguities of the moral sciences such as he felt the need of. Just how important from a social point of view Mill felt that it was to get the right sort of first principles will be seen in the next chapter.

² *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. I. (April to Sept., 1832) p. 164.

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From this time on there are two closely connected lines of development in Mill, which it will be worth while to trace out separately. The first is the story of his friendships and of his growing appreciation of the importance of social intercourse. The other is his emphasis on self-culture and his developing philosophy of the individual. As Mill's own circle of friendships increased, he realized more concretely the social ties which bind individuals together, and provide what he calls a "firm foundation" for society. And as he found a new and quiet sort of happiness in the cultivation of the inner life for its own sake, he began to lay more theoretical emphasis on the importance of self-culture. The story of Mill's friendships will provide the subject for this chapter; the development of his philosophy of the individual for that which follows.

II.

The writer of an article in the *Edinburgh Review* of January, 1874, in an unfavorable criticism of Mill's work, tries to show that Mill, being starved for friendship in his earlier youth, at this time and later in his life made very strong friendships and let his ideas be dominated by the ideas of his friends. He says, "Most of his literary criticisms were suggested by the desire to make known the merits of a friend, and his personal predilections are manifest in all of them."³ The innuendo in this criticism is certainly unfair, but there is much literal fact in it. For Mill's friends played an important part in his life and in the development of his ideas during the next few years. And it is true that this exuberance of friendliness is in some sort a reaction from the loneliness that went before.

There is no doubt about Mill's isolation in his early years, though there is no evidence of any sense of loneliness

³ *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 139, Jan. 1874, pp. 117-118.

until along about the time of the mental crisis. It was not till then that he realized that there was something he might have which he had not. But the picture we get of Mill's early days is of a precocious and self-opinionated little boy, much more at home arguing with grown people than in the companionship of others of his own age. In later years Mill realized the gaps in his early education. He said to Caroline Fox, "I never was a boy; never played at cricket. It is better to let Nature have her own way."⁴ Francis Place was visiting Bentham at Ford Abbey in 1817 while the Mills were there. In August he wrote his wife:

"John is truly a prodigy, a most wonderful fellow; and when his Logic, his Languages, his Mathematics, his Philosophy, shall be combined with a general knowledge of mankind and the affairs of the world, he will be a truly astonishing man; but he will probably be morose and selfish. Mill sees this; and I am operating upon him, when the little time I can spare can be so applied, to counteract these propensities, so far as to give him a bias towards the management of his temper, and to produce an extensive consideration of the reasonings and habits of others, when the time shall come for him to observe and practise these things."⁵

Between 1821 and 1826 (the years between fifteen and twenty in his own age) the period of his "youthful propagandism" his intimates were all older than himself. John Austin was thirty-seven in 1826, Grote, thirty-two the same year, Charles Austin, whom Mill looked upon as an "elder contemporary," was twenty-seven, William Ellis was twenty-six, and George Graham and J. A. Roebuck were both twenty-five.

The only member of the group younger than Mill was Eyton Tooke, who was born in 1808. Mill had a deep affection for Tooke, which scarcely shows itself in the *Autobiography*. But in writing to d'Eichthal after Tooke's suicide in 1830, Mill describes his sense of loss in terms which

⁴ Caroline Fox, *Memories of Old Friends*, p. 19.

⁵ Wallas, *Life of Place*, p. 136.

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can be compared only with those he used in connection with Mrs. Mill's death thirty years later:

"Ce n'est pas l'intensité, c'est la durée d'un tel chagrin qui pèse lourdement sur moi, et je le sens à l'énervement et presque à l'épuisement, pour le moment, de toute mon activité, de tout mon zèle pour l'humanité ou pour mes devoirs. Il me semble que je n'ai jamais eu d'attachement que pour lui, que je n'ai jamais travaillé que pour gagner sa sympathie et son approbation. . . . Plus tendrement je chéris sa mémoire, plus ardemment je poursuivrai ces grands objets auxquels il attachait un intérêt si profond. Je ferais peu de cas de la vie, ou de l'humanité, si je ne pensais qu'il y a dans le monde quelques hommes comme lui, et que tous ont en eux-mêmes la capacité de devenir, au moins quelque chose d'approchant de ce qu'il était."⁶

In the passage in the *Autobiography* about the mental crisis Mill speaks of his sense of friendlessness at that time:

"I sought no comfort by speaking to others of what I felt. If I had loved any one sufficiently to make confiding my griefs a necessity, I should not have been in the condition I was. I felt, too, that mine was not an interesting, or in any way respectable distress. There was nothing in it to attract sympathy. Advice, if I had known where to seek it, would have been most precious. The words of Macbeth to the physician often occurred to my thoughts. But there was no one on whom I could build the faintest hope of such assistance. My father, to whom it would have been natural to me to have recourse in any practical difficulties, was the last person, to whom, in such a case as this, I looked for help. . . . Of other friends, I had at that time none to whom I had any hope of making my condition intelligible. It was however abundantly intelligible to myself; and the more I dwelt upon it, the more hopeless it appeared."⁷

⁶ *Correspondence Inédite*, p. 118.

⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 95.

Is this the passage Mill was referring to?

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"

—*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene 3.

The earliest glimpses we get of Mill in his letters shows a young man pathetically reaching out for someone to befriend him and understand. In 1829 he wrote to John Sterling, whom he knew only slightly at that time:

"I am now chiefly anxious to explain to you, more clearly than I fear I did, what I meant when I spoke to you of the comparative loneliness of my probable future lot. Do not suppose me to mean that I am conscious at present of any tendency to misanthropy—although among the very various states of mind, some of them extremely painful ones, through which I have passed during the last three years, something distantly approximating to misanthropy was one. At present I believe that my sympathies with society, which were never strong, are, on the whole, stronger than they ever were. By loneliness I mean the absence of that feeling which has accompanied me through the greater part of my life, that which one fellow-traveller, or one fellow-soldier has towards another—the feeling of being engaged in the pursuit of a common object, and of mutually cheering one another on, and helping one another in an arduous undertaking. This, which after all is one of the strongest ties of individual sympathy, is at present, so far as I am concerned, suspended at least, if not entirely broken off. There is now no human being (with whom I can associate on terms of equality) who acknowledges a common object with me, or with whom I can co-operate even in any practical undertaking, without the feeling that I am only using a man, whose purposes are different, as an instrument for the furtherance of my own."⁸

A little later (March, 1833) he tried to pour his heart to Thomas Carlyle, and to make clear his sense of the barrier that was set between himself and other people:

"You wonder at 'the boundless capacity man has of loving'; boundless indeed it is in some natures, immeasurable and inexhaustible; but I also wonder, judging from myself, at the limitedness and even narrowness of that capacity in others. That seems to me the only really insuperable calamity in life—the only one which is not conquerable by the power of a strong will. It seems the eternal barrier between man and man—the natural and impassable limit both to the happiness and to the spiritual perfection of (I fear) a large majority of our race."⁹

⁸ J. S. Mill, *Letters*, Vol. I. p. 2.

⁹ J. S. Mill, *Letters*, Vol. I. p. 37.

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The intimacy with Carlyle lasted for a few years, but before long the essential differences in the outlook of the two men asserted itself, and they drifted apart.

With Sterling it was different. Though Sterling was away from England much of the time and Mill and he saw little of each other after the days of the Speculative Debating Society, there was a deep affection between them, and they kept up a correspondence which lasted until Sterling's death in 1844. "He was indeed," says Mill in his *Autobiography*, "one of the most lovable of men." And in 1842, in a letter to Archdeacon Hare, Mill speaks of Sterling's discouragement at not being able to do any writing, and then says:

"It is hard for an active mind like his to reconcile itself to comparative idleness, and to what he considers uselessness, only, however, from his inability to persuade himself of the good which his society, his correspondence, and the very existence of such a man diffuses through the world. If he did but know the moral and even intellectual influence which he exercises, without writing or publishing anything, he would think it quite worth living for, even if he were never to be capable of writing again."¹⁰

Another friendship important at this time was that with Gustave d'Eichthal. It was in the spring of 1828, the year after the close of the "mental crisis," that at a meeting of the London Debating Society Mill first met this attractive and winning protagonist of a new way of thought across the Channel. Open-minded as he was toward all new things, he became immediately interested in the gospel of the Saint-Simonians. Their plans for organizing industry under leaders skillful and at the same time altruistic seemed to Mill full of possibilities. And though he had no very high opinion of the machinery of their organization, in his letters to d'Eichthal he followed the custom of the Saint-Simonians and sent extravagant messages of homage to "Pierre Enfan-

¹⁰ Hare, *Life of Sterling*, Vol. I. cxciv.

tin." It was through d'Eichthal that Mill heard of Auguste Comte, who had been a member of the Saint-Simonian Group, and Saint-Simon's secretary from 1818 to 1820. Mill read Comte's *Traite de Politique Positive*, which had appeared in 1822, and was much impressed by the Saint-Simonians' theory of alternate constructive and destructive epochs in history there propounded. The Saint-Simonians believed that the universal law was the law of development. They went to some pains to prove that each age had something to contribute toward human progress. The Middle Ages, in spite of many defects, they saw to have been a constructive period. The 18th Century saw only the abuses of the system that had grown up, and tried to throw the whole thing overboard. The men of the 18th Century tried to set up as a positive guiding ideal certain negative principles such as equality and liberty, which had been the basis of their revolt. It remained for the 19th Century to find the real basis of social organization, which the Saint-Simonians thought lay in the recognition of the fact that men had different capacities, and that the governing should be done by those who had skill and experience in governing. Mill felt the Saint-Simonians were kindred spirits. For d'Eichthal especially he had a warm affection. D'Eichthal for his part bears witness to the *chaleur d'ame et veritable tendresse* which he found in the young philosopher.¹¹

The political and economic theories of the Saint-Simonians were an important factor in making Mill realize the shortcomings of the "common doctrine of the Liberals." In his *Autobiography* Mill says:

"It was partly by their writings that my eyes were opened to the very limited and temporary value of the old political economy, which assumes private property and inheritance as indefeasible facts, and freedom of production and exchange as the dernier mot of social improvement. The scheme gradually unfolded by the

¹¹ *Correspondence Inédite*, p. ix.

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Saint-Simonians, under which the labour and capital of society would be managed for the general account of the community, every individual being required to take a share of labour, either as thinker, teacher, artist, or producer, all being classed according to their work, appeared to me a far superior description of Socialism to Owen's. Their aim seemed to me desirable and rational, however their means might be inefficacious; and though I neither believed in the practicability, nor in the beneficial operation of their social machinery, I felt that the proclamation of such an ideal of human society could not but tend to give a beneficial direction to the efforts of others to bring society, as at present constituted, nearer to some ideal standard."¹²

He adds that he honored them most of all for their position on the question of women and the family.

But there were to Mill's mind many objections to the teachings of the Saint-Simonians. He objects, among other things, to their doctrine of an organized spiritual power:

"Un état dans lequel la massue du peuple, c'est-à-dire les illettrés aura pour l'autorité des savants, en morale et en politique, les mêmes sentiments de déférence et de soumission qu'elle a actuellement pour les doctes en sciences physiques."¹³

Spirit, on the contrary, Mill claimed, is a thing which cannot be organized; it is a matter of the influence—*de l'esprit sur l'esprit*.¹⁴

Gustave d'Eichthal, in his apostolic zeal, had hopes of making converts of Mill and Eyton Tooke, and starting Saint-Simonism on a triumphant career in England. But he was doomed to disappointment. It is clear from Mill's side of the correspondence that while he had a great personal liking for d'Eichthal and a great interest in the Saint-Simonians, he never would have identified himself with the Saint-Simonian School. It was, after all, a sect, and he was firm in his resolve to steer clear of any kind of sectarianism. In answer to a very zealous letter from d'Eichthal written in

¹² *Autobiography*, p. 166-167.

¹³ *Correspondence Inédite*, p. 18.

¹⁴ *Correspondence Inédite*, p. 11.

1830, soon after the death of Tooke, in which d'Eichthal said that he was thinking of coming to London in the hope that a conversation face to face would convert Mill to the new Christianity, Mill replies most characteristically. If he ever were to be converted to Saint-Simonism, he says, it would not be the result of a sudden and rapid conviction produced by a few days or even a few weeks of discussion, but the fruit of his own reflection and study. He has little use for the kind of argument when each person desires only to bring the other to his own way of thinking. It is only when each is willing to give as well as to take that discussion is worth while.

"Aussi," he says, "je suis enclin à refuser toute controverse orale avec vous, même si vous étiez ici, nous risquerions seulement d'y voir s'alterer ou s'affaiblir nos sentiments actuels réciproques, car nous nous trouverions probablement respectivement plus intraitables que nous ne pensons, tout homme se montrant dans la discussion pire qu'il n'est en réalité; appelé à défendre subitement ses opinions, il y semble inféode plus que de raison, et il est enclin à produire des arguments autres que ceux qui ont réellement agi sur son propre esprit."¹⁵

Mill seems to have felt, even if at this time he did not realize it, the inconsistency between d'Eichthal's winning personality and the sort of mechanical regimentation which was involved in the Saint-Simonian philosophy. He knew there was something wrong about it all, but he had not yet discovered just what it was. Doubtless it was partly for this reason that he refused to discuss the matter with d'Eichthal. It was not until he read the later works of Comte many years afterward, that he saw explicitly the kind of thing that the Saint-Simonian philosophy could lead to.

Mill continued to keep in touch with d'Eichthal and his friends through their ups and downs during the next few years by correspondence and through the columns of

¹⁵ *Correspondence Inédite*, p. 25.

the *Globe*. But there was little more that he could learn from them. The case was different, however, with another French philosopher, better known in our time, who had been one of Saint-Simon's followers, but had separated himself from the latter early in his career. This was Auguste Comte. Comte's *Positive Politics* had made a profound impression on Mill in 1825. After that time Mill had lost sight of the French philosopher until the appearance of the first two volumes of the *Course de Philosophie Positive* in 1837. And during the next ten years the two men kept up an active correspondence. Comte's influence on Mill was greater than one would be led to suppose from his *Autobiography* and the *Westminster Review* articles on Comte, which Mill wrote after the publication of the *Système de Politique Positive* in 1851 and after the two men had drifted apart. In the *Autobiography* Mill describes at some length Comte's influence on the *Logic*.¹⁰ But perhaps the most marked effect that Comte's philosophy had on Mill's thinking was negative. Comte's dogmatism and insistence on authority irked the liberty-loving Mill. The disagreements in matters of philosophy which led to the dropping of their correspondence with each other might have been foreseen in the light of the different temperaments of the two men. Mill was at bottom a liberal, brought up in the tradition of English individualism. Comte, on the other hand, had the Catholic Church for his background. He admired its system and order, and the authority that it exercised. His positive religion which Mill characterized as evidence of the "melancholy decadence of a great intellect" was a sort of caricature of Catholicism. Mill was always open-minded, interested in political affairs and social progress. Comte, on the other hand, in order to leave himself free for his higher speculations, made a point of not keeping up with current affairs

¹⁰ *Autobiography*, p. 147.

or current philosophical thought. He practised what he called *hygiène cérébrale*. The contrast between Mill in later years in Parliament almost against his wishes, and Comte ineffectually demanding the honor due to the high priest of positivism, symbolizes the difference between the characters of the two men.

The actual points of divergence between them are in line with their differences in temperament. The first was on the matter of psychology. Comte rejected not only the association psychology which was so dear to Mill's heart, but all psychology based on introspection, and substituted for it phrenology. Another matter of dispute was the position of women. Comte insisted women were men's inferiors intellectually, though he thought them superior on the emotional side. Mill believed that the differences between men and women could be largely explained by outward circumstances and claimed for them equal opportunities with men, though he did admit the possibilities of certain innate differences. But the chief difference between them had to do with the fundamental conception of liberty and authority. Comte clung to his early theory of alternating critical and organic periods in the world's history. The essential thing about organic periods was the unified organization of society under some central authority. This was true of the Middle Ages and was to be true of the positive era which Comte saw dawning. The critical periods were, to Comte's way of thinking, purely negative. Criticism had no place in an organic period. He saw nothing of permanent value in the ideas of the French Revolution. Mill, on the other hand, believed that criticism was an important social function all the time. Comte's ideas on government and on education Mill viewed with particular horror. He says that nothing can exceed Comte's

"combined detestation and contempt for government by assemblies and for parliamentary or representative institutions in any form.

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They are an expedient, in his opinion, only suited to a state of transition, and even that nowhere but in England. The attempt to naturalize them in France, or any Continental nation, he regards as mischievous quackery. Louis Napoleon's usurpation is absolved, is made laudable to him, because it overthrew a representative government. Election of superiors by inferiors, except as a revolutionary expedient, is an abomination in his sight."¹⁷

Comte thought that all education should be centralized under the spiritual power, and confined to practical matters:

"It is no exaggeration to say that M. Comte gradually acquired a real hatred for scientific and all purely intellectual pursuits, and was bent on retaining no more of them than was strictly indispensable. The greatest of his anxieties is lest people should reason and seek to know more than enough. He regards all abstraction and all reasoning as morally dangerous by developing an inordinate pride (*orgueil*), and still more, by producing dryness (*sècheresse*). Abstract thought, he says, is not a wholesome occupation for more than a small number of human beings, nor of them for more than a small part of their time."¹⁸

Students should be taught

"not only without encouraging, but stifling as much as possible, the examining and questioning spirit. The disposition which should be encouraged is that of receiving all on the authority of the teacher."¹⁹

Mill's distaste for Comte's regimentation of affairs served only to bind him more closely to his own conviction of the importance of individuality and variety, and of freedom for people to think their own thoughts and live their own lives. In the *Politique Positive* particularly, Mill saw a despotism which would put an end to freedom—political, intellectual, and spiritual—once and for all. "Comte's book," Mill says, "stands a monumental warning to thinkers on society and politics, of what happens when once men lose sight, in their speculations, of the value of Liberty and of Individuality."²⁰

¹⁷ *The Positive Philosophy of August Comte*, p. 140.

¹⁸ *The Positive Philosophy of August Comte*, p. 160.

¹⁹ *The Positive Philosophy of August Comte*, p. 161.

²⁰ *Autobiography*, p. 149.

Mill's early enthusiasm for Comte on account of his scientific method contrasted with his later criticism of Comte, illustrates very clearly a point that will be brought out in the next chapter—that is, the shift which took place in Mill's interest from "science," so called, to warmer and more human interests. Mill's friendships between 1825 and 1840 brought into his life a new richness, and many new things to think about. His friendships made him realize the underlying ties of affection and sympathy that could bind people together. But he realized, too, the importance of contrasts in social life. He saw that unless each person had some special contribution to make, social life would lose that very richness and diversity that make it valuable. As time went on, this matter of the development of the individual seemed to Mill more and more important.

III.

This was brought home to him and tremendously re-enforced in Mill's own experience by what he calls the "most important friendship" of his life—that with Harriet Hardy Taylor, whom he afterward married. Though Mill was influenced by the romantic movement on the continent, his own philosophy was the opposite of romantic. The emphasis was on the intellect—cold, detached, and analytical. But there is a warmth in his very enthusiasm for clear thinking and general principles, which suggests a personal romanticism in sharp contrast with his philosophical rationalism. It was this personal attitude which found its extreme expression in the case of Mrs. Taylor.

The familiar story of the friendship between Mrs. Taylor and Mill, leading to their marriage in 1851, need not be recounted. But the episode was important in many ways. For one thing, it accounts for his withdrawing more and more from society as he did after the publication of the

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Logic in 1843, and for the peculiar sensitiveness which he displays about his personal affairs. There was a good deal of disapproval on the part of Mill's friends on the score of his intimacy with Mrs. Taylor. His father blamed him for being in love with another man's wife. A coldness sprang up between him and his mother and sisters due to a fancied slight of Mrs. Taylor—it seems that they did not call on her the day after Mill announced his intended marriage, as he thought they should have done. Mrs. Grote stopped seeing Mill apparently for this reason, and Roebuck says that a remonstrance which he made to Mill on the matter of his relations with Mrs. Taylor led to the cessation of their friendship.²¹ Mill's preference for Mrs. Taylor's company to Carlyle's was one cause of the drifting apart of Mill and Carlyle. It may be inferred that Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Carlyle did not get along very well together. Carlyle writes of these years:

"Mill was another steady visitor (had by this time introduced his Mrs. Taylor, too,—a very will-o'-wispish "iridescence" of a creature; meaning nothing bad either). She at first considered my Jane a rustic spirit fit for rather tutoring and whirling about when the humor took her, but got taught better (to her lasting memory) before long."²²

On account of his admiration for Mrs. Taylor, Mill felt to an almost morbid degree the pressure of the adverse opinion of his friends. It was an experience calculated to make him feel more strongly than ever how important it is for the individual to be free to lead his or her own life as he or she sees fit, without interference from the rest of society. The distinction he makes in the *Essay on Liberty* between matters of importance to the individual himself and matters of more general social importance is ever in his mind. Of his relation to Mrs. Taylor, Mill says "we did not

²¹ Bain, *John Stuart Mill*, p. 163. See also "Notes on the Private Life of John Stuart Mill" in Volume I of the *Letters*.

²² Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 256.

consider the ordinances of society binding on a subject so entirely personal.”²³

As to Mrs. Mill’s influence on her husband on the intellectual side, there will always remain a good deal of uncertainty. Mill’s own estimate of her intellectual ability is so extravagantly eulogistic that if it had come from a less considerable person it would have little weight. He compares her to Shelley, but says that “in thought and intellect, Shelley, so far as his powers were developed in his short life, was but a child compared with what she ultimately became.”²⁴ Her memory was to him “a religion,” and every reference to her is in an exalted tone. She seemed the embodiment of wisdom:

“As during life she continually detected, before any one else had seemed to perceive them, those changes of times and circumstances which ten or twelve years later became subjects of general remark; so I venture to prophesy, that, if mankind continued to improve, their spiritual history for ages to come will be the progressive working-out of her thoughts, and realization of her conceptions.”²⁵

Bain considers the suggestion that she might have been simply a clever and attractive woman who gave him back his own ideas, but points out that Mill always liked opposition in conversation, and expresses the opinion that their intercourse could not have been as deep and lasting as it was simply on that basis.²⁶ As for Mill’s own estimate of her influence on himself, he felt that his best work was in the field of abstract principles, and that what she added was a common sense opinion about application.

“Her mind invested all ideas in a concrete shape, and formed to itself a conception of how they would actually work; and her knowledge of the existing feelings and conduct of mankind was

²³ *Autobiography*, p. 161.

²⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 131.

²⁵ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III. p. 94.

²⁶ Bain, *John Stuart Mill*, p. 173.

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so seldom at fault that the weak point in any unworkable suggestion seldom escaped her.”²⁷

When he first met Mrs. Taylor, Mill was at the height of his reaction from the early utilitarian kind of individualism. The attractive and clever young woman, with the atmosphere of Fox’s radicalism about her, gave new value and impetus to his faith in liberty and democracy, a faith which had for a time been pushed into the background by the pressure of the new and interesting opinions of Coleridge and Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians. Mill says:

“There was a moment in my mental progress when I might easily have fallen into a tendency towards over-government, both social and political; as there was also a moment when, by reaction from a contrary excess, I might have become a less thorough radical and democrat than I am. In both these points, as in many others, she benefited me as much by keeping me right where I was right, as by leading me to new truths and ridding me of errors. My great readiness and eagerness to learn from everybody, and to make room in my opinions for every new acquisition by adjusting the old and the new to one another, might, but for her steadying influence, have seduced me into modifying my early opinions too much.”²⁸

These years of expanding interests and new friendships thus taught Mill the joy of friendly discussion with people of different points of view, and the exhilaration of the sense of a growing personality, making part of itself new experiences, and new interpretations of experience. Specifically they taught Mill two things. In the first place they made him realize how far down into human nature go the roots of friendship, and sympathy, and fellow feeling. They made him see how superficial was the older utilitarian analysis of unselfishness as a sort of enlightened selfishness, a thing built up in some artificial way from instincts in themselves disruptive. In *Utilitarianism* Mill points out that “moral associations which are wholly of artificial creation, when intel-

²⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 176.

²⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 177.

lectual culture goes on, yield by degrees to the dissolving force of analysis." So unless they "harmonize" with a "powerful class of sentiments," these associations will not give a firm foundation for morality. "But," he goes on to say, there is a "basis of powerful natural sentiment."

"This firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature. . . . The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body."²⁹

The foundations of morality are not to be built up out of pure or "artificial" associations, but rest somehow in the structure of things. The world is of such a sort that it will support the identification by association of one's own good with the good of others.

In the Essay on Sedgwick, Mill says of the moral feelings:

"It is not pretended that they are factitious and artificial associations, inculcated by parents and teachers purposely to further certain social ends, and no more congenial to our natural feelings than the contrary associations. The idea of the pain of another is naturally painful; the idea of the pleasure of another is naturally pleasurable. From this fact in our natural constitution, all our affections, both of love and aversion towards human beings, insofar as they are different from those we entertain towards mere inanimate objects which are pleasant or disagreeable to us, are held, by the best teachers of the theory of utility, to originate. In this, the unselfish part of our nature, lies a foundation, even independently of inculcation from without, for the generation of moral feelings."³⁰

In the second place this broadening out of his own social experience made him realize how different real "society" was from that strange abstraction, compounded of identical

²⁹ *Utilitarianism*, p. 9.

³⁰ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I. p. 163.

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atoms,—the individuals—which his father and Jeremy Bentham and the rest had discoursed about. His friendships with people of many different sorts, his contacts with new points of view, brought home to him the fact of the uniqueness of each personality. He was beginning to see that much that was interesting and important was to be discovered along the path of the realization of people's differences, as well as by the emphasis of their similarities. And as far as Mill's own personality was concerned, these new friendships and this growing realization of the importance of individuality was providing for him a new interest in life, and was making him forget, by degrees, the bleak days of the mental crisis.



Chapter IV.

The Internal Culture of the Individual.

I.

In the years around 1840 we find Mill beginning to narrow the circle of his friendships and to withdraw more and more from public life. It was about this time that he decided that "society was at best an insipid affair" and began to devote himself more and more to Mrs. Taylor and to his literary work. The disapproval of his family and friends in the matter of his increasing intimacy with Mrs. Taylor, as recounted in the last chapter, was one cause for this. But there was, nevertheless, behind Mill's withdrawal from social life a very real conviction on his part of the importance of his own literary work and of the danger of wasting too much time in the general run of social affairs. He wrote Mazzini in 1858:

"I sympathize too strongly both with your taste for solitude and with the devotion of your time and activity to the great object of your life, to intrude on you with visits or invitations. We, like you, feel that those who would either make their lives useful to noble ends, or maintain any elevation of character within themselves, must in these days have little to do with what is called society. But if it can be any pleasure to you to exchange ideas with people who have many thoughts and feelings in common with you, my wife and I reckon you among the few persons to whom we can sincerely say that they may feel sure of being welcome."¹

Another cause for his withdrawal is to be found in his

¹ *Letters*, Vol. I. p. 201.

disappointment at the failure of the reform party to follow up the success of the Reform Bill of 1832. This re-enforced his conviction of the mediocrity of the average individual of his day. But Mill's reaction to this situation was not only negative. On the contrary the commonplaceness of people, whether in "society" or politics, made him feel all the more strongly the importance of making a conscious effort to develop some individuals here and there out of this mediocrity. His emphasis on "self culture" was very definitely directed toward this end.

In that part of Caroline Fox's *Memories* which has to do with these years there are some interesting passages about Mill. His brother, Henry Mill, who was dying of tuberculosis, had been taken to Falmouth early in 1840 in the hope that the sea air would be of help to him. John Stuart Mill came down at frequent intervals to be with his family. John Sterling was there much of the time. They were often at the Fox's and had long conversations on politics and philosophy and religion which Caroline Fox recounts. She quotes Mill as saying:

"Avoid all that you prove by experience or intuition to be wrong, and you are safe; especially avoid the servile imitation of any other, be true to yourself, find out your individuality, and live and act in the circle around it. Follow with earnestness the path into which it impels you, taking reason for your safety-lamp and perpetually warring with inclination; then you will attain to that freedom which results only from obedience to right and reason, and that happiness which proves to be such, on retrospection. Every one has a part to perform whilst stationed here, and he must strive with enthusiasm to perform it. Every advance brings its own particular snares, either exciting to ambition or display, but in the darkest passages of human existence a pole star may be discovered, if earnestly sought after, which will guide the wanderer into the effulgence of light and truth. What there is in us that appears evil is, if thoroughly examined, either disproportioned or misdirected good, for our Maker has stamped his own image on everything that lives."

She concludes:

"Oh! how much there was this evening of poetry, of truth, of beauty! but I have given no idea of it on paper, though it has left its own idea engraven on my memory."²

Allowance must be made for Caroline Fox's somewhat sentimental and moralistic editorship, but whatever Mill said, her impression of emphasis on the importance of individual development is significant. She gives in full a letter from Mill to Barclay in which Mill says:

"But there is only one plain rule of life eternally binding, and independent of all variations in creeds, and in the interpretation of creeds, embracing equally the greatest moralities and the smallest; it is this: try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and outward circumstances being both duly considered, and then DO IT."³

Writing later of Mill's development, she speaks of another letter from Mill to Barclay in which Mill "speaks of his growing conviction that individual regeneration must precede social progress, and in the meantime he feels that the best work he can do is to perfect his book on *Logic*, so as to aid in giving solidity and definiteness to the workings of others." She quotes a statement by Sterling who said of Mill:

"He has made the sacrifice of being the undoubted leader of a powerful party for the higher glory of being a private in the army of Truth, ready to storm any of the strong places of Falsehood, even if defended by his late adherents. He was brought up in the belief that politics and social institutions were everything, but he has been gradually delivered from this outwardness, and feels now clearly that individual reform must be the groundwork of social progress."⁴

II.

Sterling's remark about Mill's realization of the inadequacies of politics and government is penetrating. It points again to the shift that took place in Mill's interests, which

² *Caroline Fox*, p. 17.

³ *Caroline Fox*, p. 20.

⁴ *Caroline Fox*, p. 35.

was seen in the last chapter in connection with Mill's later reaction to Auguste Comte. This development in Mill's thought is one from an attempt to formulate a science of human nature in the sense which James Mill and Jeremy Bentham conceived it, an affair of general laws, quantitative and uniform, to a realization of the importance of those human values which cannot be weighed and measured and made part of a simple and comprehensive scientific system. Mill was beginning to see that the mechanical view of human nature in which he had been brought up was not adequate to explain human nature as it really is, with its joys and sorrows, its hopes and aspirations, its loves and hates, its strivings and successes and failures. And as time went on, this human side of human nature seemed to him more and more to be important. He was becoming more and more interested in individual differences, in concrete individuals, and in the unique contributions that individual personalities could make to the social whole.

But on the other hand, there were certain limitations which stood in the way of Mill's complete acceptance of all that this type of individualistic philosophy implies. The first of these was a matter of temperament. In spite of Goethe's motto and Mill's resolution to steer clear of any kind of sectarianism, Mill was after all by nature a protagonist of a certain point of view. He was at his best when he was in the thick of the philosophical fray—not when he was standing on an emotional mountain top, viewing the battle from afar. His conviction of the importance of giving every side of every question a fair hearing in the interest of ultimate truth did not prevent him from earnestly defending his own particular philosophical position, and as earnestly denouncing those with whom he disagreed, as, for example, Hamilton and the other representatives of the intuitionist school. And in spite of his theoretical emphasis on the value of the interplay of individuality, the friends of whom he saw less and

less as time went on were those who, like Carlyle and d'Eichthal and Roebuck and Comte, had a point of view fundamentally different from his own, and those whom he saw increasingly more of were men like Bain and Chadwick and Thornton, whose intellectual position—economical, political, social, and philosophical—was much the same as his.

This same temperamental limitation can be seen in Mill's intercourse with foreigners. With all his interest in things French and his visits to the continent, he was, and remained, essentially an Englishman. He was willing to admit in the abstract that ways of doing things other than English ways are more fitting in lands other than England, and his denunciations of British life were frequent and vociferous. But after all the standards by which he judged were the customs of his own land. He had the typical British disdain for other national cultures. The emphasis on individuality throughout his writings might have led to that sort of internationalism which stresses the special contributions of different races as they go to make up a rich and varied and complex world culture, but we look in vain for this point of view in Mill's writings on international affairs.

Another limitation is to be found in the fact that Mill was not, after all, a man of very catholic experience. His first hand knowledge of life was pretty closely confined to that particular stratum of English society to which he belonged. He did not know a great deal at first hand about the actual lives of the laboring people. He had not known in his own experience, as Francis Place, for instance, knew, the misery and suffering that could be caused by the industrial situation in his day. An unpublished journal of his trip to the lake country in 1831 contains an account of his contact with some of the industrial towns in the northern part of England, but Mill's interest in the working people, and his plans for their improvement, were based more on books and statistics and poor law reports than on what he saw and heard for himself.

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And on the other hand, he had almost no contact with the English aristocracy. He knew few of them intimately, and almost never went into their homes. Writing to Sterling in 1831 he says:

"If there were but a few dozens of persons safe (whom you and I could select) to be missionaries of the great truths in which alone there is any well-being for mankind individually or collectively, I should not care though a revolution were to exterminate every person in Great Britain and Ireland who has £500 a year. Many very amiable persons would perish, but what is the world the better for such amiable persons?"⁵

Later on, to be sure, we find him speaking of an educated aristocracy as the chief protection from the mediocratizing tendencies of democracy. But this again was a theoretic check, and he had in mind not the aristocracy as they were, but an ideal aristocracy made up of men of leisure devoted to art and letters and government.

Another and more specific limitation was Mill's fundamental loyalty to the association psychology. We can find no fault with Mill for continuing to work away at the science of human nature. For the purpose of prediction and control we have to analyze phenomena into simple units and view the observed behaviour of things in terms of quantitative laws as simple as possible. The trouble with this "scientific" approach both in Mill's day and in our own, is that it tends, whether consciously or unconsciously on the part of its advocates, to go over into the position that the "scientific" aspect of human nature is the only aspect that is "real." The differences which just because they are differences cannot be brought into a generalized scheme of things—the uniquenesses—all those things that make personality what it is—come to be discounted. This was the thing that Mill discovered; hence the increasing emphasis on individuality in his writings.

⁵ *Letters*, Vol. I. p. 15.

But at the same time his interest in clear thinking and logical method remained. His discovery of the valuable differences in individuals did not make him forget their valuable similarities. He was convinced that sound principles of morals and economics and social reform and government could be based only on sound philosophy. This was his fundamental objection to the philosophy based on intuition. He says:

"The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory, every inveterate belief and every intense feeling, of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the obligation of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification. There never was such an instrument devised for consecrating all deep-seated prejudices."⁶

This is all very well as far as it goes. As an instrument for understanding and guiding social processes, the philosophy based on intuition was little better than a collection of pious wishes. But when Mill tries to go ahead and develop a closely articulated social philosophy of his own, he begins to get into trouble.

There were two causes of confusion in the specific way in which Mill developed his scientific approach to social problems: in the first place he insisted on clinging to the principles of the association psychology, and in the second place he tried to use general principles not only in the study of conditions as they actually exist, but also in an intellectualistic fashion as rules for determining the path of social advance. Mill kept to the end his faith in the ultimate efficacy of the principles of the association psychology to give a satisfactory account of mental processes. His edition of his father's *Analysis of the Human Mind* published with elaborate notes in 1856 bears witness to this. It is to

⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 158.

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his mind high praise when he writes of Herbert Spencer in 1864, "I have read through his *Principles of Psychology* which is as much better than I thought as the *First Principles* are less good. . . . He has great mastery over the obscurer applications of the associative principle."⁷

This allegiance got him into various kinds of trouble. It explains for one thing why he never made much progress with a project that he had much at heart for many years, namely the development of the science of Ethology. Psychology, Mill says, "ascertains the simple laws of mind in general." Ethology "traces their operations in complex combinations of circumstances."

"Ethology stands to Psychology in a relation very similar to that in which the various branches of natural philosophy stand to mechanics. The principles of Ethology are properly the middle principles, the *axiomata media* (as Bacon would have said) of the science of mind, as distinguished, on the one hand, from the empirical laws resulting from simple observation, and on the other, from the highest generalizations."⁸

The empirical laws here referred to include among other things "aphorisms" from which at one time Mill hoped to get much help. In his essay entitled *Aphorisms* Mill points out that "there are two kinds of wisdom," one kind dependent on long chains of reasoning, the other that "acquired by experience of life." This unsystematic wisdom is embodied in aphorisms. That they are unsystematic is no argument against them, because "truths, each of which rests on its own independent evidence, may surely be exhibited in the same unconnected state in which they were discovered." "These detached truths are at once the materials and the tests of philosophy itself; since philosophy is not called in to prove them, but may very justly be required to account for them."⁹ They are also, for practical purposes, the guides

⁷ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 7.

⁸ *Logic*, p. 603.

⁹ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I. p. 233.

of life. In the essay on Sedgwick he says: "Every one directs himself in morality, as in all his conduct, not by his own unaided foresight, but by the accumulated wisdom of all former ages embodied in traditional aphorisms."¹⁰

But this does not mean that conduct should not be guided by systematic reason. "Moral doctrines," he says, "are no more to be received without evidence, nor to be sifted less carefully, than any other doctrines. An appeal lies, as on all other subjects, from a received opinion, however generally entertained, to the decisions of cultivated reason."¹¹ This is where the greatest happiness principle comes in. The importance of the principle lies precisely in this, that it gives us a standard whereby we can judge what maxims are good, and what are bad. Aphorisms were the immediate material from which the science of Ethology was to be constructed. Aphorisms or maxims are the empirical rules which result from "simple observation." Ethology was to have been the connecting link between the aphorisms (and similar conclusions based on direct observation and the experience of man) and the greatest happiness principle.

But Mill never made much progress with Ethology. In a letter to Bain written as late as 1859 he speaks about the latter's forthcoming book on phrenology and on "the science of character," and says:

"I expect to learn a good deal from it, and to be helped by it in anything I may hereafter write on Ethology—a subject I have long wished to take up, at least in the form of Essays, but have never yet felt myself sufficiently prepared."¹²

But there is more than this to be said on Mill's failure to get ahead with the new science. He failed because the construction of the science of Ethology, as he conceived of it, was an impossible undertaking. It was to have been based

¹⁰ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I. p. 172.

¹¹ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I. p. 185.

¹² *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 226.

on the general principles established by the association psychology, and it was impossible just because that psychology gave a faulty account of the working of men's minds. Aphorisms and maxims and the like represent insights into different and unique types of situations. And the association psychology was not rich enough to systematize them without leaving out that about them which was distinctive.

This difficulty with Ethology is closely linked up with the other cause of confusion above referred to, namely, that Mill, in one of his moods, kept trying to bring the whole business of living under a few general principles, going back to the greatest happiness principle itself. The first chapter of *Utilitarianism* as well as the last Book of the *Logic*, make it clear that Mill thought that it was essential to discover some one principle to which all questions of the conduct of life could be referred. He states this very clearly at the end of the *Logic*:

"There are not only first principles of Knowledge, but first principles of Conduct. There must be some standard by which to determine the goodness or badness, absolute and comparative, of ends, or objects of desire. And whatever that standard is, there can be but one; for if there were several ultimate principles of conduct, the same conduct might be approved by one of those principles and condemned by another; and there would be needed some more general principle, as umpire between them.

"Accordingly, writers on Moral Philosophy have mostly felt the necessity not only of referring all rules of conduct, and all judgments of praise and blame, to principles, but of referring them to some one principle; some rule, or standard, with which all other rules of conduct were required to be consistent, and from which by ultimate consequence they could all be deduced. Those who have dispensed with the assumption of such a universal standard, have only been enabled to do so by supposing that a moral sense, or instinct, inherent in our constitution, informs us, both what principles of conduct we are bound to observe, and also in what order these should be subordinated to one another.

"The theory of the foundations of morality is a subject which it would be out of place, in a work like this, to discuss at large, and which could not to any useful purpose be treated incidentally.

I shall content myself, therefore, with saying, that the doctrine of intuitive moral principles, even if true, would provide only for that portion of the field of conduct which is properly called moral. For the remainder of the practice of life some general principle, or standard must still be sought; and if that principle be rightly chosen, it will be found, I apprehend, to serve quite as well for the ultimate principle of Morality, as for that of Prudence, Policy, or Taste."¹³

The scheme that he suggests would place every department of human action under one of these three heads. Philosophy, from this point of view, was the Science of Life. There was, corresponding to this, an Art of Life, related to the Science of Life as any art is to the science which underlies it, that is by the fact that it states the findings of science not (as science does) according to their causes, but with reference to the purpose for which, in any particular connection, the discoveries of science are to be used. The Art of Life has "three departments":

"Morality, Prudence or Policy, and Aesthetics; the Right, the Expedient, and the Beautiful or Noble, in human conduct and works. To this art (which, in the main, is unfortunately still to be created), all other arts are subordinate; since its principles are those which must determine whether the special aim of any particular art is worthy and desirable, and what is its place in the scale of desirable things. Every art is thus a joint result of laws of nature disclosed by science, and of the general principles of what has been called Teleology, or the Doctrine of Ends."¹⁴

And yet at other times Mill saw clearly enough that there was a certain incommensurability among values. His famous admission of qualitative distinction between pleasures, damaging as it was to his own system, is an indication of this. His classification of actions in the Essay on Bentham into their moral, aesthetic, and sympathetic aspects, while it points toward the later attempt at systematization suggested in the foregoing quotation from the *Logic*, shows, never-

¹³ *Logic*, pp. 657-8.

¹⁴ *Logic*, p. 657.

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theless, that Mill had a lively sense of the difficulties involved in any such classification. A somewhat different attempt at organizing this material into a coherent system leads Mill to a distinction which is to be found in several places in his writings between the "Province of Duty" and the "Province of Free Virtue."

In *Utilitarianism* we read:

"It is the business of ethics to tell us what are our duties, or by what test we may know them; but no system of ethics requires that the sole motive of all we do shall be a feeling of duty; on the contrary, ninety-nine hundredths of all our actions are done from other motives, and rightly so done, if the rule of duty does not condemn them."¹⁵

A more explicit statement of this is to be found in the essay, "Thornton on Labour and Its Claims," published in the *Fortnightly Review* of May, 1869:

"Mr. Thornton seems to admit the general happiness as the criterion of social virtue, but not of positive duty—not of justice and injustice in the strict sense; and he imagines that it is in making a distinction between these two ideas that his doctrine differs from that of utilitarian moralists. But this is not the case. Utilitarian morality fully recognizes the distinction between the province of positive duty and that of virtue, but maintains that the standard and the rule of both is the general interest. From the utilitarian point of view, the distinction between them is the following:—There are many acts, and a still greater number of forbearances, the perpetual practice of which by all is so necessary to the general well-being, that people must be held to it compulsorily, either by law, or by social pressure. These acts and forbearances constitute duty. Outside these bounds there is the innumerable variety of modes in which the acts of human beings are either a cause, or a hindrance, of good to their fellow-creatures, but in regard to which it is, on the whole, for the general interest that they should be left free; being merely encouraged, by praise and honour, to the performance of such beneficial actions as are not sufficiently stimulated by benefits flowing from them to the agent himself. This larger sphere is that of Merit or Virtue."¹⁶

¹⁵ *Utilitarianism*, p. 17.

¹⁶ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. V. pp. 60-61.

In the *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, we find the same distinction. Mill says that the religion of humanity "makes the same ethical mistake as the theory of Calvinism, that every act in life should be done for the glory of God, and that whatever is not a duty is a sin. It does not perceive that between the region of duty and that of sin there is an intermediate space, the region of positive worthiness. It is not good that persons should be bound, by other people's opinion, to do everything that they would deserve praise for doing. There is a standard of altruism to which all should be required to come up, and a degree beyond it which is not obligatory, but meritorious. It is incumbent on every one to restrain the pursuit of his personal objects within the limits consistent with the essential interests of others. What those limits are it is the province of ethical science to determine; and to keep all individuals and aggregations of individuals within them, is the proper office of punishment and of moral blame. If in addition to fulfilling this obligation, persons make the good of others the direct object of disinterested exertions, postponing or sacrificing to it even innocent personal indulgences, they deserve gratitude and honor, and are fit objects of moral praise. So long as they are in no way compelled to this conduct by any external pressure, there cannot be too much of it; but a necessary condition is its spontaneity; since the notion of a happiness for all, procured by the self-sacrifice of each, if the abnegation is really felt to be a sacrifice, is a contradiction. Such spontaneity by no means excludes sympathetic encouragement; but the encouragement should take the form of making self-devotion pleasant, not that of making everything else painful."¹⁷

If M. Comte had followed the guidance of Catholic ethics in this matter, Mill says, he would have done better:

"We do not conceive life to be so rich in enjoyments that it can afford to forego the cultivation of all those which address themselves to what M. Comte terms the egotistic propensities. On the contrary, we believe that a sufficient gratification of these, short of excess, but up to the measure which renders the enjoyment greatest, is almost always favorable to the benevolent affections. The moralization of the personal enjoyments we deem to consist, not in reducing them to the smallest possible amount, but in cultivating the habitual wish to share them with others and with all others and scorning to desire anything for one's self which

¹⁷ *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, p. 129.

is incapable of being so shared. There is only one passion or inclination which is permanently incompatible with this condition—the love of domination, or superiority, for its own sake; which implies, and is grounded on, the equivalent depression of other people. As a rule of conduct, to be enforced by moral sanctions, we think no more should be attempted than to prevent people from doing harm to others, or omitting to do such good as they have undertaken.”¹⁸

Mill had come to realize that there were limits within which the “science” of human nature must be confined, and that most of the important values of life are to be found along the path of individual development.

III.

So much then for Mill’s explicit attempts at a science of human nature. But these attempts, after all, make up a relatively small part of the total bulk of his writings. And when he writes from his heart about the social problems which he sees pressing upon the people of his day, the considerations on the basis of which he came to his conclusions are in the main somewhat different from the system of general principles which he gave when it came to rationalizing. If, in studying that part of Mill’s work which has to do with social problems themselves, rather than with the logic of the social sciences, we forget about his familiar inherited principles and try to discover what were the underlying ideas which seemed important to him, we find one central thought underlying most of his conclusions. This is the idea of personality as something growing from within and developing by intercourse with others. Mill, to be sure, did not talk about personality. Though he was coming to realize the importance of society in its effect on the individual, he was a long way from the idea of the complete interdependence between the individual and the group, which is

¹⁸ *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, p. 131.

bound up with the word "personality" in present-day parlance. But when Mill talked about "individuality" he had the germ of this conception in his mind. It will be worth while to analyze somewhat more closely just what Mill meant by individuality.

In the first place it was closely connected with the interest in "self-culture" that appeared after the mental crisis. Very soon Mill saw that the great mistake of the early utilitarians was their one-sided emphasis on the externals of moral theory.

"I ceased," he says, "to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action. I had now learnt by experience that the passive susceptibilities needed to be cultivated as well as the active capacities, and required to be nourished and enriched as well as guided."¹⁹

"It is really important," says Mill in another place, "not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it."²⁰ One of Mill's chief criticisms of Bentham was that he had nothing to say about the value of a conscious effort on the part of the individual toward self-cultivation. To Mill's mind to leave this out was to leave out one-half of morality. "Morality consists of two parts. One of these is self-education.—That department is a blank in Bentham's system."²¹ In the Table of the Springs of Action, Bentham omits a whole series of what are real motives—sympathy, self-respect, the sense of honor, the love of beauty, the love of order, the love of power, and some more, all of which involve the recognition of important inner values.²² These are the things which go to make up character. The early Utilitarians in their desire to emphasize consequences overlooked the fact that certain habits, dispositions, ways of doing

¹⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 100.

²⁰ *Liberty*, p. 117.

²¹ *Essay on Bentham, Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I. p. 388.

²² *Essay on Bentham, Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I. p. 384.

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things, may be developed in individuals, which may be of great moral importance. This error was involved with their oversimplified doctrine of motive. John Stuart Mill never got quite clear on this, but at least he saw that there was a gap in Bentham's system. And he felt the practical importance, not only from a moral point of view, but from the standpoint of the individual's own happiness, of a conscious effort on the part of the individual to build up resources within himself.

A practical objection to this doctrine of self-culture which presented itself to Mill's mind was the principle of "necessity" as applied to the question of the freedom of the will. Behind the discussion of the freedom of the will in the *Logic* lies the desire to reconcile a conviction of the truth of the doctrine of necessity which his early upbringing and the doctrine of universal causality demanded, with his equally strong conviction of the importance to the individual of the sense of being able to shape his own character and mould his own destiny. Necessitarian as he is, he says:

"The application of so improper a term as Necessity to the doctrine of cause and effect in the matter of human character, seems to me one of the most signal instances in philosophy of the abuse of terms, and its practical consequences one of the most striking examples of the power of language over our associations. The subject will never be generally understood until that objectionable term is dropped. The free-will doctrine, by keeping in view precisely that portion of the truth which the word Necessity puts out of sight, namely the power of the mind to co-operate in the formation of its own character, has given to its adherents a practical feeling much nearer to the truth than has generally (I believe) existed in the minds of necessitarians. The latter may have had a stronger sense of the importance of what human beings can do to shape the characters of one another; but the free-will doctrine has, I believe, fostered in its supporters a much stronger spirit of self-culture."²³

The individual must have a real conviction that self-cul-

²³ *Logic*, p. 585.

ture is both possible and worth while, if by self-culture individuality is to be fostered and developed.

Three other conceptions have an important connection in Mill's mind with the idea of individuality. These are spontaneity, diversity, and competition. The influence of the philosophy of romanticism upon Mill, through Coleridge, Maurice, Sterling, and others, has been alluded to above. An integral part of this philosophy was the idea of the development of the individual as something that took place spontaneously, from within—a doctrine very different from anything in the philosophy of the early utilitarians. Mill was acquainted with the writings of Pestalozzi, whose experiments in education expressed and substantiated this view of the nature of the individual.

Pestalozzi, under the influence of Rousseau, had come to the conclusion that education was not something that could be gotten only out of books, not primarily learning Greek and Latin,—the current doctrine since the Renaissance—but came somehow from within the individual. His desire was to educate the whole man. He took a number of poor children into his home at Neuhof, and trained them on the farm and in the work shop. Education had to do with things, he thought, not with words. We should go from "things to words." For him the center of interest was the child himself, not the things he was going to be taught, and the most important thing about the child was his own spontaneous activity. In Pestalozzi (as later in Carlyle) we find the figure of the individual growing from within, like a plant or a tree. He says: "Teach me, summer day, that man, formed from the dust of the earth, grows and ripens like a plant, rooted in the soil." Mill mentions Pestalozzi as a particularly important figure in the history of the development of the conception of the value of individual freedom. Pestalozzi's conception of the self-activity of the individual, of the growth and development of the self from

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within, is almost the direct antithesis of Locke, Helvetius, and James Mill, and the conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa*. John Stuart Mill tells us that his father, when he was teaching, counted on the intelligibility of the abstract, presented by itself without the help of any concrete form. And it must be admitted that in the case of his son, his pedagogical theory was pretty well justified by its results. But the new viewpoint characteristic of Rousseau and Pestalozzi made a profound impression upon John Stuart Mill. In the essay on liberty in later years, Mill writes:

"Human nature is not a machine,—but a tree, which requires to grow and develops itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing."²⁴

Writing of Mrs. Mill in the *Autobiography* he speaks of the "spontaneous tendency" of her faculties, "which could not receive an impression or an experience without making it the source or the occasion of an accession of wisdom." He says, "Up to the time when I first saw her, her rich and powerful nature had chiefly unfolded itself according to the received type of feminine genius."²⁵

The idea of spontaneity, as a more definitely formulated scientific concept, was coming into importance in psychology about the time that Mill was working on these problems. Bain, in a chapter on "Spontaneous Activity and Feelings of Movement" in *The Senses and the Intellect* (published in 1855), states that

"movement precedes sensation, and is at the outset independent of any stimulus from without. . . . Action is a more intimate and inseparable property of our constitution than any of our sensations, and in fact enters as a component part into every one of the senses, giving them the character of compounds while itself is a simple and elementary property."²⁶

²⁴ *Liberty*, p. 117.

²⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 130.

²⁶ Bain, *The Senses and the Intellect*, p. 59.

Among the arguments for this position he mentions the "exuberant activity of the young," and says:

"The activity of young animals in general, and of animals remarkable for their active endowments (as the insect tribe), may be cited as strongly favouring the hypothesis of spontaneity. When the kitten plays with a worsted ball, we always attribute the overflowing fullness of moving energy to the creature's own inward stimulus, to which the ball merely serves for a pretext. So an active young hound, refreshed by sleep or kept in confinement, pants for being let loose, not because of anything that attracts his view or kindles up his ear, but because a rush of activity courses through his members, rendering him uneasy till the confined energy has found vent in a chase or a run."²⁷

A considerable part of Mill's review of *The Senses and the Intellect*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh* for October, 1859, is an exposition of the place of spontaneity. This contribution on Bain's part Mill characterizes as "the first capital improvement which Mr. Bain has made in the Association Psychology as left by his predecessors." Bain, says Mill:

"holds that the brain does not act solely in obedience to impulses, but is also a self-acting instrument; that the nervous influence which, being conveyed through the motory nerves, excites the muscles into action, is generated automatically in the brain itself, not, of course, lawlessly and without a cause, but under the organic stimulus of nutrition; and manifests itself in the general rush of bodily activity, which all healthy animals exhibit after food and repose, and in the random motions which we see constantly made without apparent end or purpose by infants. This doctrine, of which the accumulated proofs will be found in Mr. Bain's first volume (pages 73 to 80), supplies him with a simple explanation of the origin of voluntary power."²⁸

And it supplies Mill with further evidence for the truth of the view of human nature on which his doctrine of individuality was based.

The second principle is that of diversity. Self-culture

²⁷ Bain, *The Senses and the Intellect*, p. 68.

²⁸ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. IV. p. 125.

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is valuable precisely because people are different from each other, and as a result of self-culture many new and interesting things will come to pass. Diversity is something to be fostered and encouraged.

As a sort of text for the essay on liberty Mill quotes the following from Wilhelm von Humboldt's *The Sphere and Duties of Government*; "The grand leading principle toward which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity."²⁹ Later we find another quotation from Von Humboldt to the effect that for the development of personality there is required "freedom and variety in situations." Thus diversity comes in in two ways. Mill recognized that as a matter of fact people are different from each other and that for the development of individuality there must be diversity also in their surroundings. But the two things go together. If individuality is recognized and fostered it will produce a social situation where there will be increasingly more scope for individuality.

The admission that people differ among themselves is the important point. It is a radical departure from the doctrine of the early Utilitarians. However they may have acted in the every day relations of life, their philosophy was based on the hypothesis that the individuals who made up society could be regarded for all intents and purposes as being identical. But John Stuart Mill saw that this was by no means the whole truth. He says:

"There is no reason that all human existence should be constructed on some one or some small number of patterns. If a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode. Human beings are not like sheep; and even sheep are not

²⁹ *Liberty*, p. 116.

undistinguishably alike. A man cannot get a coat or a pair of boots to fit him unless they are either made to his measure, or he has a whole warehouseful to choose from: and is it easier to fit him with a life than with a coat, or are human beings more like one another in their whole physical and spiritual conformation than in the shape of their feet?"³⁰

People are different. It is only by recognizing and cultivating their peculiar gifts on the part of individuals, that the most worthwhile social order may be achieved:

"It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it, and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation; and as the works partake the character of those who do them, by the same process human life also becomes rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings, and strengthening the tie which binds every individual to the race, by making the race infinitely better worth belonging to."³¹

Mill saw too the importance of variety in man's environment. His account of the oppression he felt during the mental crisis at the thought of the exhaustibility of the combinations of musical tones shows the kind of thing he was reacting against. His love of natural scenery, and his fear lest with the growth of mechanical civilization the beauties of primitive nature would be crowded out, is another indication of this same feeling.³² If to James Mill uniformity was a cherished hypothesis, to John Stuart Mill it was a practical danger.

The other important concept is that of competition. It is what Mill calls in one connection, the "principle of antagonism." It is essential for individual development that there should be opposition to be overcome, conflicting opinions to be considered, competition with others and emulation

³⁰ *Liberty*, p. 125.

³¹ *Liberty*, p. 120.

³² *Political Economy*, Vol. II. p. 339; *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 55, 56.

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of others. The following, quoted by Mill from Von Humboldt, illustrates the idea that he has in mind:

"Among men who are really free, every form of industry becomes more rapidly improved—all the arts flourish more gracefully,—all sciences become more largely enriched and expanded. . . . Among such men emulation naturally arises," and (speaking of education), "tutors better befit themselves, when their fortunes depend upon their own efforts, than when their chances of promotion rest on what they are led to expect from the State."⁸³

Mill would not agree with the unbounded optimism that this statement reveals; but he would agree with it in principle. In economics, as we shall see, this points to competition in the technical sense and to economic liberalism; in political theory it lies behind Mill's emphasis on the value of opposition between different political parties. And this is where liberty comes in. Without freedom of expression, freedom of development for different points of view and different ways of life, there would be no chance for that give and take which is such an important factor in increasing the variety and interest in human life, and so essential for the progressive development of individuality.

This idea of the importance of developing individuality is the conception which lies behind all that Mill wrote on the social problems of his day. It represents a long step in advance of the formal individualism which characterized Mill's teachers, and in behalf of which he himself started out to conquer the world. It is true that his interest in the formulation of scientific principles remained, but the interest in personality came first, and was the dominant factor in his philosophy. How this works itself out in his political economy, his philosophy of government, and his treatment of the more general problem of the limits of the authority of the social group over the individual, will be seen in the following chapters.

⁸³ Von Humboldt, *Sphere and Duties of Government*, p. 69.

Chapter V.

Individuality and Political Economy.

I.

Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* appeared in 1848. It was a very different kind of book from the works on political economy which had been written in the years preceding. In the first place it undertook to examine the philosophical foundation of the classical political economy, particularly the status of the so-called economic laws. In the second place, as the subtitle of the work indicates, in addition to the "principles of political economy," the work includes "some of their applications to Social Philosophy." The political economists immediately preceding Mill had not thought very much about the problems involved in either of those points. They were so busy working political economy out on the model of mathematics that they did not concern themselves much either with its foundations or its social implications. Nassau Senior was typical. Gide and Rist say of him that he

"removed from political economy every trace of system,* every suggestion of social reform, every connection with a moral or conscious order, reducing it to a number of essential, unchangeable principles. Four propositions seemed essential for this new Euclid, all necessary corollaries being easily deducible from one or other of these. Senior's ambition was to make an exact science of it, and he deserves to be remembered as one of the founders of pure economics."

* In the sense of political or social program.

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The four principles were: The Hedonistic Principle; The Principle of Population; The Law of Increasing Return in Industry; and The Law of Diminishing Return in Agriculture.¹ Gide and Rist over-simplify, perhaps, but in any case it is sufficiently clear that the main interest of this group of economists was on the theoretical side. They were so deeply interested in developing their economic theory that they simply failed to see the social implications which this theory involved. John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, had had for a long time a real concern for the people at the bottom of the social heap. In the debates with the Owenites, who regarded the "political economists" as "their most inveterate enemies,"² he must have learned a good deal, not only about the condition of the working people, but also about what they thought of the solutions which the political economists offered for their troubles. He was much impressed by the report of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1833, the condition of the agricultural workers, and the lot of the Irish peasants. In addition to a real interest in economic theory for its own sake he wanted to make it an instrument for bettering these conditions.

A particular fallacy into which the doctrines of the older political economists led them was the belief that their so-called "economic laws" were laws of nature. Ruthless profiteering and the oppression of laboring people were defended as necessary results of the "natural law" of competition. Clearly if these were "laws" that could not be modified, the plight of the common people was sad indeed. Economics might well be called the dismal science. But Mill saw that there was more to be said on this matter and that there was need for a closer analysis of the relation between "economic laws" and "natural law." His solution of this problem, which is linked up with the whole of his philosophy of nature and

¹ Gide and Rist, *History of Economic Doctrines*, p. 350.

² *Autobiography*, p. 87.

of the laws of nature, is of fundamental importance for the understanding of his political economy. In the *Essay on Nature* he says:

"Nature means the sum of all phenomena, together with the causes which produce them, including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening."³

But he goes on to say this definition "corresponds only to one of the senses of this ambiguous term." It conflicts, for instance, with the common use of nature as opposed to art, and natural as opposed to artificial. Art, in this sense, is but a part of nature in its proper sense. "Art is but the employment of the powers of nature for an end."⁴ In all "artificial operations," man's part is a

"very limited one; it consists in moving things into certain places. We move objects and, by doing this, bring some things into contact which were separate, or separate others which were in contact; and by this simple change of place, natural forces previously dormant are called into action, and produce the desired effect."⁵

The injunction to "follow nature," if it means anything, means simply to study nature and make use of the laws of nature:

"Though we cannot emancipate ourselves from the laws of nature as a whole, we can escape from any particular law of nature, if we are able to withdraw ourselves from the circumstances in which it acts. Though we can do nothing except through laws of nature, we can use one law to counteract another. According to Bacon's maxim, we can obey nature in such a manner as to command it. Every alteration of circumstances alters more or less the laws of nature under which we act; and by every choice which we make either of ends or of means, we place ourselves to a greater or less extent under one set of laws of nature instead of another."⁶

This passage throws light on the distinction in the Politi-

³ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 5.

⁴ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 7.

⁵ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 8.

⁶ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 17.

cal Economy between production, a matter of natural laws, and distribution, which "depends on the laws and customs of society."⁷ In his *Autobiography*, in the passage in which he tells of the influence of Mrs. Mill, Mill speaks of what he considers the greatest contribution of the *Political Economy*. He says that it lies in

"making the proper distinction between the laws of the Production of Wealth, which are real laws of nature, dependent on the properties of objects, and the modes of its Distribution, which, subject to certain conditions, depend on human will. The common run of political economists confuse these together, under the designation of economic laws, which they deem incapable of being defeated or modified by human effort; ascribing the same necessity to things dependent on the unchangeable conditions of our earthly existence, and to those which, being but the necessary consequences of particular social arrangements, are merely co-extensive with these."⁸

This was a sort of magna charta for the individual, hitherto governed inexorably by the iron law of wages, and other "laws" equally forbidding. For if the laws of distribution could be ordered by men for their own well being, there was opened up a vast region of possibilities of relief and emancipation for that miserable multitude of men and women and children who found themselves at the bottom of the pile in the economic order of those days, and who thought, if they thought at all, that immutable economic laws compelled them to stay there. This distinction at the beginning of the *Principles of Economics* was, for those who had eyes to see it, a ray of hope in a dark land, over which the gloom of the dismal science brooded like the smoke from the factory chimneys over the city of Manchester. And the rest of the *Principles* is an effort to ascertain how, men being thus free, the laws of distribution can best be ordered for the well-being of mankind.

⁷ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 258.

⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 174.

The foregoing makes it, perhaps, sufficiently clear that an important motive behind Mill's work in Political Economy was humanitarian. It was social welfare that he was primarily interested in. But we can go further than that. A more detailed study of what Mill had to say about certain economic problems where social values are particularly important, shows that the kind of social order Mill wanted was one in which individuality would be encouraged. This may be seen most clearly in relation to what Mill has to say about property, wages, and competition. Each of these has special bearing on his conception of the development of individuality.

II.

The champions of the classical political economy always assumed the principle of private property. For Bentham, security was the most important thing which the government had to provide for the well-being of the people, and security meant security of property. John Stuart Mill, however, was sufficiently emancipated from this tradition to be able to subject the principle of private property to a frank and thorough criticism. The institution of private property, as the institution on which the "economical arrangements of society" have almost universally rested, is discussed in Book II of the *Political Economy*. Though the production of wealth is governed by natural laws, "society can subject the distribution of wealth to whatever rule it thinks best,"⁹ and the ownership of property is a matter of distribution. The question is, what arrangement for the distribution of wealth is most desirable. The alternatives to a regime of private property which presented themselves to Mill's mind were the various varieties of Socialism which blossomed and faded during the first half of the nineteenth century. Mill had a chance to know something first hand of the experiments in

⁹ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 259.

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Socialism, communistic or not communistic, which were being tried in his day. His early debates with the Owenites and his acquaintance with Saint-Simonianism through Gustave d'Eichthal have been mentioned already. In his various trips to France he had seen and heard a good deal of the followers of Louis Blanc and Fourier. In the *Political Economy* he devotes considerable space to the exposition of the systems of these four men. He admits the truth of many of their objections to a private property regime, and goes so far as to say in a well-known passage:

"If, therefore, the choice were to be made between Communism with all its chances, and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices; if the institution of private property necessarily carried with it as a consequence that the produce of labour should be apportioned as we now see it, almost in an inverse ratio to the labour—the largest portions to those who have never worked at all, the next largest to those whose work is almost nominal, and so in a decreasing scale, the remuneration dwindles as the work grows harder and more disagreeable, until the most fatiguing and exhausting bodily labour cannot count with certainty on being able to earn even the necessities of life; if this, or Communism, were the alternatives, all the difficulties, great or small, of Communism would be but as dust in the balance."¹⁰

But Communism must be compared not with the regime of individual property as it is, but as it might be. The success of Communism would depend on two conditions, "universal education" and "due limitation of the numbers of the community." And under these conditions, most of the evils of which communists complain would be done away, even if we retained our present social institutions.

Mill's defense of private property as against socialism centers about two points—the value from the point of view of individuality of the ownership of property, and the value of competition. In his discussion of private property Mill goes back to a conception of a right of private property rem-

¹⁰ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 267.

iniscient of Locke. Locke's social and political philosophy was based on the idea of the law of nature; he goes back to a conception of man living in a state of nature and having certain "natural rights." The first of them is the right to life and self-preservation, together with the right to food, drink, and the other essentials of human existence. Next is the right of each to do as he pleases, as long as he does not interfere with the equal rights of others. Finally, there is the right of each to the fruits of his own labor. Whatever a man "removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property."¹¹ So for Mill private property is "the guarantee to individuals of the fruits of their own labor and abstinence":

"Nothing is implied in property but the right of each to his (or her) own faculties, to what he can produce by them, and to whatever he can get for them in a fair market; together with his right to give this to any other person if he chooses, and the right of that other to receive and enjoy it."¹²

From this principle follow two others. The first is freedom of contract:

"The right of each to what he has produced, implies a right to what has been produced by others, if obtained by their free consent; since the producers must either have given it from good will, or exchanged it for what they esteemed an equivalent, and to prevent them from doing so would be to infringe their rights of property in the product of their own industry."¹³

The second is the right of bequest, or gift after death.¹⁴ The government may limit property rights and regulate them in certain ways. Taxes, for defense against invasion by foreign powers and for such other government functions as

¹¹ Locke, *Treatise on Civil Government*, Chap. V. Sec. 27.

¹² *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 281.

¹³ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 280.

¹⁴ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 281.

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on other grounds are deemed proper, are admitted by all. The right of bequest, Mill thinks, should be limited. It enables people to accumulate large fortunes without working for them, and makes possible the endowment in perpetuity of institutions which are of no use to society. With regard to this second point, Mill thinks there should be some body in the State with power to judge of the value of the purpose for which endowments of long standing are used, and divert the money to other uses when it seems best.¹⁵ With regard to the right of bequest to individuals, he says that the ability to give what belongs to you, even after death, is a necessary part of the right of property. He would not limit the right of *bequest*, but would limit the right of *inheritance* to a fixed sum for each individual.¹⁶

Property in land is on a different basis from property in things which a person has produced:

"The essential principle of property being to assure to all persons what they have produced by their labor and accumulated by their abstinence, this principle cannot apply to what is not the produce of labor, the raw material of the earth."¹⁷

But property in land has many advantages. Though land itself is "not the produce of industry, most of its valuable qualities are so."¹⁸ To induce people to work the land, whether it be farming or mining, or any of the other operations by which natural products are made valuable by labor, it is necessary to give a certain security of possession, especially when there is any considerable investment necessary.

For the agricultural population, security in the possession of their land is a great advantage. It inculcates in them habits of thrift, industry, and foresightedness. Mill quotes Arthur Young: "It is the magic of property which turns

¹⁵ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I. p. 58.

¹⁶ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. pp. 281, 288; Vol. II. p. 338.

¹⁷ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 291.

¹⁸ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 292.

sand into gold.”¹⁹ The last half of Book Two of the *Political Economy* is a study of the different types of tenancy on the part of the agricultural population. Mill comes to the conclusion that the people are happy and prosperous and well clothed and well fed just in proportion as they have security in possession of the land and a fair return for their labor. This, he thinks, can be best accomplished by peasant proprietorships, or, in some cases, by the Metayer System, where the tenant and the landlord divide the produce in some pre-arranged proportion.

You cannot speak of private property in land as you can of private property in other things. A person may have certain property rights in land—as the right to till it, or to live on it—and at the same time the public might have other rights, as that to walk across it. Mill speaks of the opinion that “land ought not to be private property, but should belong to the State,” and says that his opinion has always seemed to him “fundamentally just.”²⁰

In 1873 Mill wrote a paper on the right of property in land for the Land Tenure Reform Association. It was the last thing he wrote before his death.²¹ His position is substantially that of the *Political Economy*. The only justification for property in land is that it is an incentive to labor on land, which is necessary for the production of food. But:

“when we know the reason of a thing, we know what ought to be its limits. The limits of the reason ought to be the limits of the thing. . . . No rights to land should be recognized which do not act as a motive to the person who has power over it to make it as productive or otherwise as useful to mankind as possible.”²²

The conclusion is that the landlord should get from the

¹⁹ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 254.

²⁰ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 123.

²¹ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 387.

²² *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 388.

land only such return as is brought about by his own improvement of it:

"If the nation at large have enhanced the value of the land independently of anything done either by landlord or tenant, that increase of value should belong to the nation."²³

In judging the value of these principles which grow out of the "idea of private property" Mill's interest in individuality has much weight. The deciding factor between communism and the private property regime is "one consideration, viz., which of the two systems is consistent with the greatest amount of liberty and spontaneity."

"The perfection both of social arrangements and of practical morality would be, to secure to all persons complete independence and freedom of action, subject to no restriction but that of not doing injury to others; and the education which taught or the social institutions which required them to exchange the control of their own actions for any amount of comfort or affluence, or to renounce liberty for the sake of equality, would deprive them of one of the most elevated characteristics of human nature."²⁴

For the development of personality, then, is needed a certain amount of control over certain physical things. In his discussion of private property Mill is not interested so much in defending the abstract right of private property, as in safeguarding private property as a means for the development of individual freedom.

III.

Another significant indication of Mill's increasing regard for personality is his development of the doctrine of wages held by the economists who immediately precede him. The older economists regarded the laborer as a salesman whose commodity was his labor. Porter speaks of "The mere

²³ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 389.

²⁴ *Political Economy*, Vol. I. p. 269.

laborer, who had nothing to bring to market but his limbs and his sinews.”²⁵ The result of this was (a) that wages were supposed to be determined simply by supply and demand, (b) that the laborer was supposed to have no interest in what he produced, after his day’s work was done and he had been paid for it, and (c) that high wages are supposed to increase the supply of labor (by increasing the birth rate) and conversely, just as high prices of commodities increase production. And owing to the confusion mentioned above about the meaning of natural law, there went with the more or less valid belief in the truth of this analysis of the situation as it then existed, the added and entirely gratuitous conviction that this state of affairs could never be changed.

On the first of the three points mentioned above Ricardo says:

“The market price of labor is the price which is really paid for it, from the natural operation of the proportion of the supply to the demand; labor is dear when it is scarce, and cheap when it is plentiful. . . . However much the market price of labor may deviate from the natural price, it has, like commodities, a tendency to conform to it.”²⁶

With regard to the second point, the artificial separation of the workman from his labor, the following from James Mill is significant:

“The laborer who receives wages sells his labor for a day, a week, a month, or a year, as the case may be.”

The only difference, says the elder Mill, between a man who buys a slave and a man who employs labor is that one buys at one time

“the whole of the labor which the man can ever perform: he who pays wages purchases only so much of a man’s labor as he can perform in a day or other stipulated time.”²⁷

²⁵ Quoted by Nicholson, *Corn Laws*, p. 96.

²⁶ Ricardo, *Political Economy*, p. 71.

²⁷ James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*, pp. 21-22.

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The third point—the matter of the relation between the number of the working population and wages, was taken very seriously, not only by his predecessors, but by John Stuart Mill himself. Ricardo says:

“The natural price of labor is that price which is necessary to enable the laborers, one with another, to subsist and perpetuate their race, without either increase or diminution.”²⁸

And James Mill says:

“If more workmen cannot be obtained—wages will be raised; which, giving an impulse to population, will increase the number of laborers.”²⁹

This “natural price” of labor was admittedly an artificial figure, to be used simply for the purposes of analysis, and yet it tended to perpetuate certain misleading ideas. One of these was the assumption that the population was divided into fixed classes with a stationary standard of living. According to this view, the only outlet for increased wages was for the workman to have a larger family. For a workman to buy a piano or get out of the laboring class entirely was a thing undreamt of in the philosophy of these particular economists. And even if this assumption of fixed classes were true, the effect of wages on the size of a working man’s family would be an unimportant factor in the total wage situation, on account of the length of time necessary for this effect to take place. A thousand and one other factors would come in in the meantime.

John Stuart Mill never completely freed himself from some of the misleading assumptions of these doctrines. His opposition to trade unions was based on his belief that the only hope for the working people was an increasing intelligence and foresightedness which would result in smaller families and a consequent reduction of the supply of labor. And yet he saw very clearly that the idea of a laborer as

²⁸ Ricardo, *Political Economy*, p. 70.

²⁹ James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*, p. 25.

simply selling his work is incompatible with the development of personality.

"To begin as hired labourers," Mill says in the well-known chapter on the "Future of the Labouring Classes," "then after a few years to work on their own account, and finally employ others, is the normal condition of labourers in a new country, rapidly increasing in wealth and population, like America or Australia."³⁰ Something of this sort is looked upon as their goal by the laboring population in older and more populous countries. The most practical plan for bringing this about is to Mill's mind some form of co-operative association. Of these there are two kinds. The first is the situation where the employer shares his profits with the working people, generally by paying them a fixed wage, and giving them a certain share in the profits besides. Of the second kind Mill says:

"The form of association, however, which if mankind continue to improve, must be expected in the end to predominate, is not that which can exist between a capitalist as chief and working people without a voice in the management, but the association of the labourers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves."³¹

By this means the working people can make a beginning toward the achievement of education, independence, and that real interest in their work which is essential to the fuller development of individuality.

IV.

The question of the value of competition came up very definitely when Mill faced the Socialists' indictment of the then existing economic order. The Socialist of that day had a strong case against competition. Mill states it and answers it

³⁰ *Political Economy*, Vol. II. p. 350.

³¹ *Political Economy*, Vol. II. pp. 357-358.

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in his essay on *Socialism*, which was written in 1869 but not published till ten years after his death. Competition, according to the Socialist, is

“grounded on opposition of interests, not harmony of interest, and under it every one is required to find his place by a struggle, by pushing others back or being pushed back by them. Socialists consider this system of private war (as it may be termed) between every one and every one, especially fatal in an economical point of view and in a moral. Morally considered, its evils are obvious. It is the parent of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness; it makes every one the natural enemy of all others who cross his path, and every one’s path is constantly liable to be crossed. Under the present system, hardly any one can gain except by the loss or disappointment of one or of many others.”⁸²

He quotes Louis Blanc’s *Organisation du Travail* to show that the effect of competition, coupled with a high birth rate on the part of the laboring population and the throwing of people out of work by machinery, is to reduce wages to the starvation point. When it comes to the middle classes, the tendency of competition is to concentrate business in the hands of a few monopolists. While goods may be cheap as long as competition lasts, when the monopolies come prices will go up. Even during the competition stage, competition encourages dishonesty and adulteration.

But Mill is not daunted by these objections. The advantages of competition to his mind clearly outweigh all the disadvantages. The Socialists, he says, see only one side of the matter. As far as wages are concerned, competition has as much of a tendency to keep wages up and prices down as to produce the contrary effect. This at least will be the case when the working people learn the importance of the limitation of the number of their offspring. The danger of monopoly, predicted by the Socialist, Mill thinks is not serious. Companies, such as railway companies, which have to carry on business on a “vast scale,” should be subject to

⁸² *Socialism*, pp. 34-35.

regulation by the State.³³ The Socialists' charge that competition results in adulteration and an inferior quality of goods, Mill finds more difficult to answer. For a solution of this difficulty, Mill falls back on "laws against commercial fraud," and the institution of co-operative stores.

Then Mill turns his attention to the more important question, that of the relation between competition and character. He says:

"In the case of most men the only inducement which has been found sufficiently constant and unflagging to overcome the ever-present influence of indolence and love of ease, and induce men to apply themselves unrelaxingly to work for the most part in itself dull and unexciting, is the prospect of bettering their own economic condition and that of their family; and the closer the connection of every increase of exertion with a corresponding increase of its fruits, the more powerful is this motive. To suppose the contrary would be to imply that with men as they now are, duty and honor are more powerful principles of action than personal interest, not solely as to special acts and forbearances respecting which those sentiments have been exceptionally cultivated, but in the regulation of their whole lives; which no one, I suppose, will affirm. It may be said that this inferior efficacy of public and social feelings is not inevitable—is the result of imperfect education. This I am quite ready to admit, and also that there are even now many individual exceptions to the general infirmity. But before these exceptions can grow into a majority, or even into a very large minority, much time will be required. The education of human beings is one of the most difficult of all arts, and this is one of the points in which it has hitherto been least successful; moreover improvements in general education are necessarily very gradual because the future generation is educated by the present, and the imperfections of the teachers set an invincible limit to the degree in which they can train their pupils to be better than themselves. We must therefore expect, unless we are operating upon a select portion of the population, that personal interest will for a long time be a more effective stimulus to the most vigorous and careful conduct of the industrial business of society than motives of a higher character."³⁴*

³³ *Socialism*, p. 73.

³⁴ *Socialism*, p. 100 ff.

* In defending the doctrine that each individual is the only safe

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In somewhat the same spirit he writes in the *Political Economy* in the chapter on the "Probable Futurity of the Laboring Classes":

"I do not pretend that there are no inconveniences in competition, or that the moral objections urged against it by Socialist writers, as a source of jealousy and hostility among those engaged in the same occupation are altogether groundless. But if competition has its evils, it prevents greater evils. . . . It is a common error of Socialists to overlook the natural indolence of mankind; their tendency to be passive, to be the slaves of habit, to persist indefinitely in a course once chosen. Let them once attain any state of existence which they consider tolerable, and the danger to be apprehended is that they will thenceforth stagnate; will not exert themselves to improve and by letting their faculties rust, will lose even the energy required to preserve them from deterioration. Competition may not be the best conceivable stimulus, but it is at present a necessary one, and no one can foresee the time when it will not be indispensable to progress. . . . Instead of looking upon competition as the baneful and anti-social principle which it is held to be by the generality of Socialists, I conceive that, even in the present state of society and industry, every restriction of it is an evil, and every extension of it, even if for the time injuriously affecting some class of labourers, is always an ultimate good. To be protected against competition is to be protected in idleness,

guardian of his own rights and interests in the essay on Representative Government he says that many people are fond of holding this doctrine "up to obloquy" as a "doctrine of universal selfishness." He then proceeds to turn their weapons against themselves in his best controversial style, "We may answer," he says, "that whenever it ceases to be true that mankind, as a rule, prefer themselves to others, and those nearest to them to those more remote, from that moment Communism is not only practicable, but the only defensible form of society; and will, when that time arrives, be assuredly carried into effect. For my own part, not believing in universal selfishness, I have no difficulty in admitting that Communism would even now be practicable among the elite of mankind, and may become so among the rest. But as this opinion is anything but popular with those defenders of existing institutions who find fault with the doctrine of the general predominance of self-interest, I am inclined to think they do in reality believe that most men consider themselves before other people."—*Representative Government*, pp. 208-209.

in mental dullness; to be saved the necessity of being as active and as intelligent as other people.”³⁵

But he goes on to point out that even if competition were not necessary as an incentive, it has other important advantages. Answering in another place an objection made by the communists, he says:

“But even the dissensions which might be expected would be a far less evil to the prospects of humanity than a delusive unanimity produced by the prostration of all individual opinions and wishes before the decree of the majority. The obstacles to human progression are always great, and require a concurrence of favorable circumstances to overcome them; but an indispensable condition of their being overcome, is that human nature should have freedom to expand spontaneously in various directions, both in thought and practice; that people should both think for themselves and try experiments for themselves, and should not resign into the hands of rulers, whether acting in the name of a few or of the majority, the business of thinking for them, and of prescribing how they shall act. But in Communist associations private life would be brought in a most unexampled degree within the dominion of public authority, and there would be less scope for the development of individual character and individual preferences than has hitherto existed among the full citizens of any state belonging to the progressive branches of the human family.”³⁶

Mill makes it clear that his interest in competition is due at least in part to the fact that he regards it as an instrument of self-culture. It is not for him an abstract principle of value apart from its results. In the essay on “Thornton on the Claims of Labor,” Mill criticizes Thornton on just this point. Thornton maintains that laborers have a right to combine against employers to force wages up; he seems to say that anything that results from this is what it should be, because you can’t go behind the “right” of competition. Mill takes particular pleasure in pointing out that this is just the kind of a predicament you get yourself in if you

³⁵ *Political Economy*, Vol. II. pp. 379-380.

³⁶ *Socialism*, pp. 116-117.

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try to base a theory of conduct on rights, and not on utility.⁸⁷

An interesting distinction between fair and unfair competition comes out in a letter written by Mill in 1865 to the Secretary of the Co-operative Plate-Lock Manufactory at Wolverhampton. Such co-operative plans for industrial organization seemed to him on the whole the best solution of the problem connected with the relations of capital and labor. He devoted a good deal of space to this matter in the *Political Economy* and came to be known as a good friend of co-operative enterprises. The Plate-Lock Makers had been carrying on a hard fight against a combination of private employers who were systematically trying to undersell them and put them out of business, and had appealed to Mill, among others, for financial help. He says:

"Sir: I beg to enclose a subscription of £10 to aid as far as such a sum can do it, in the struggle which the Co-operative Plate-Lock Makers of Wolverhampton are maintaining against unfair competition on the part of the masters in the trade. Against fair competition I have no desire to shield them. Co-operative production carried on by persons whose hearts are in the cause, and who are capable of the energy and self-denial always necessary in its early stages, ought to be able to hold its ground against private establishments—and persons who have not those qualities had better not attempt it. But to carry on business at a loss in order to ruin competitors is not fair competition. In such a contest, if prolonged, the competitors who have the smallest means, though they may have every other element of success, must necessarily be crushed through no fault of their own. Having the strongest sympathy with your vigorous attempt to make head against what in such a case may justly be called the tyranny of capital, I beg you to send me a dozen copies of your printed appeal, to assist me in making the case known to such persons as it may interest in your favour."⁸⁸

The point here is that competition is for a purpose—that is, to encourage industry, originality, activity, resourcefulness.

⁸⁷ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. V. pp. 69-70.

⁸⁸ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 21.

The combination against the Plate-Lock Manufacturers was unfair precisely because it brought in a factor—the money back of the private interests—which, in the end, would result in monopoly, and make competition impossible.

This same point may be illustrated by Mill's attitude to slavery. He was an undying foe of this institution. He saw in the doing away with slavery by Great Britain in all parts of the Empire in 1833, at a cost of £20,000,000, a particularly splendid act. He was one of a very few upper-class Englishmen who stood out for the North at the time of the American Civil War. It was Mill's faith in competition as a means of developing that initiative and self-reliance which seemed to him so important, that determined his attitude in this matter also. It is significant that Mill makes almost no use of the hardships and sufferings of the slaves as an argument against slavery. He was a good deal of an ascetic himself, and whether for himself or for others he cared much more for the things which fostered education, individual development, liberty, than for mere material prosperity and physical well-being. In a review of Professor Cairnes' book, *The Slave Power*,³⁹ Mill summarizes the evils resulting from slavery. Slave labor is suited only to certain kinds of industries, namely, those in which a large amount of supervision is possible. It is reluctant, unskillful, and "wanting in versatility." Because it is hard to teach the slaves to do more than one kind of thing, there is no attempt at rotation of crops, and the soil becomes exhausted. Its effect on the upper classes is bad. They become despotic and self-willed, they become indolent and lazy; and this, coupled with the fact that a large amount of capital is required to run a plantation profitably means that they get into debt. Two things are typical of industry carried on by slaves, "the magnitude of the plantations and the indebtedness of the planters."

³⁹ *Westminster Review*, October, 1862; *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III. p. 246 ff.

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Another result of the tendency of the large planters to buy out the small, and the competition of negro slave labor with free white labor, is the arrival on the scene of "poor whites," "white trash." Another evil is that there is only one political party. "That variety of interests which springs from the individual impulses of a free population does not here exist."⁴⁰ Furthermore, slavery, as an economic institution, does not pay. It is so inefficient that wherever it is confined within a given territory, it works its own ruin. It can "be profitable for the slave holder only when there is virgin land to cultivate, virgin timber to cut down, or when he can breed slaves to sell to slaveholders in new territories."⁴¹ The slave system seemed to Mill not only brutal and inhuman, but it afforded him an excellent example of the stagnation which is bound to result where the stimulus of competition is wanting.

From these considerations it may be seen that Mill thought that the value of competition for self-culture is two-fold. It provides an incentive for the individual to overcome his own inertia, and it makes possible that variety and diversity without which a full and interesting and worthwhile life is not possible. It is only from the mutual opposition and the interplay of different ways of doing things, different social customs, different points of view on practical matters of every-day life, on economic questions, on government, on philosophy, or on religion, that the best life for the individual and for society can be achieved. But for this sort of competition between different points of view the individual must be free within large limits to conduct his business in his own way, to manage his own property, to express his own opinions, and to live his own life. This brings us to the question of the "Limits of the Province of Govern-

⁴⁰ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III. p. 275, quoted from Cairnes.

⁴¹ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III. p. 283.

ment" which Mill discusses in the last book of the *Political Economy*, and opens up the whole matter of the individual and the liberty of the individual in relation to the political state, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter VI.

Individuality and Government.

I.

Macvey Napier, editor of the supplement to the sixth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for the writer of the articles on Government, Jurisprudence, Liberty of the Press, and some other subjects, selected one "James Mill, Esq., author of the *History of British India*." In 1828 these articles were reprinted and published in book form. They are written in James Mill's most logical, lucid and condensed style, and give expression to the characteristic theories of the followers of Bentham. Coming from the camp of the enemy, they constituted a challenge that the *Edinburgh Review* could not resist, and in March, 1829, there appeared in that magazine a criticism of Mill's essay on Government by Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Macaulay directs his attack upon Mill's method:

"It is one of the principal tenets of the Utilitarians that sentiment and eloquence serve only to impede the pursuit of truth. They therefore affect a quakerly plainness, or rather a cynical negligence and impurity, of style. The strongest arguments, when clothed in brilliant language, seem to them so much wordy nonsense. In the mean time they surrender their understandings, with a facility found in no other party, to the meanest and most abject sophism, provided those sophisms come before them disguised with the externals of demonstration. They do not seem to know that logic has its illusions as well as rhetoric,—that a fallacy may lurk in a syllogism as well as in a metaphor."¹

¹ Macaulay, *Works*, Vol. I. p. 389.

In keeping with this tradition, Macaulay says, Mill adopts the *a priori* method of reasoning. "He is an Aristotelian of the fifteenth century—born out of due season." His assumptions are two. The first is the greatest happiness principle—that the purpose of government is "to increase to the utmost the pleasures, and diminish to the utmost the pains, which men derive from each other." With this Macaulay substantially agrees. The second assumption is the self-interest of every individual. Despotism or monarchy are necessarily bad; despots being men, and men being selfish, despots will necessarily exploit the people. The only good government is a democracy, where the source of authority lies in the people themselves. This, Macaulay points out, simply isn't true. There have been many good despots and many good kings. And there have been many bad democracies.

There are some incidental points of interest which Macaulay makes with regard to James Mill's political theory. He calls attention to the fact that under James Mill's plan not the whole people, but the majority would govern; and if men were actuated by the selfish motives that Mill assumed, there would be nothing to prevent the majority from plundering the minority. This question came to be an important consideration in later years. Again, Macaulay says that to be consistent, Mill should allow not only all the men, but all the women to have votes. He quotes Mill:

"One thing is pretty clear, that all those individuals whose interests are involved in those of other individuals, may be struck off without inconvenience. . . . In this light women may be regarded, the interest of almost all of whom is involved either in that of their fathers, or in that of their husbands."

What has happened to Mill's self-interest principle?

"Without adducing one fact, without taking the trouble to perplex the question by one sophism, he placidly dogmatizes away the interest of one-half the human race."²

² Macaulay, *Works*, Vol. I. p. 407.

In view of the younger Mill's later interest in the enfranchisement of women, this has a truly prophetic ring.

A particular point upon which he takes Mill up is his faulty analysis of human nature. Mill says men always act from "self interest." Macaulay points out that this either means "that men, if they can, will do as they choose," which is a truism and doesn't get anywhere, or it means that men act from selfish motives, which is false. "The proposition ceases to be identical; but at the same time, it ceases to be true." The whole argument of Mill's essay is based on a shifting back and forth between these two meanings. It "consists of one simple trick of legerdemain."³ Elsewhere Mill admits that men do sometimes act for the good of others, owing to the "pains derived from the unfavorable sentiments of mankind." On this premise, Macaulay works out a very pretty theorem "in the mathematical form in which Mr. Mill delights" proving that no rulers will do anything that will hurt the people, and proclaims his "εὖρηκα" in Mill's own words: "The chain of inference, in this case, is close and strong to a most unusual degree."⁴ Macaulay's conclusion is that "It is utterly impossible to deduce the science of government from the principles of human nature." We cannot say whether the love of approbation is a stronger motive than the love of wealth even in our best friends. The only way progress can be made in the theory of government is to study the effect of particular motives on particular individuals, and adapt the government to the particular situation. *

³ Macaulay, *Works*, Vol. I. pp. 415-416.

⁴ Macaulay, *Works*, Vol. I. p. 397.

* An answer to Macaulay's criticism appeared in an early number of the *Westminster Review*. Macaulay answered this in the *Edinburgh Review* of June, 1829. This was followed by another answer in the *Westminster* and a rejoinder by Macaulay in the October *Edinburgh*, but the arguments in the later stages of the controversy add little to what was brought out in Macaulay's first essay.

II.

In the *Autobiography* John Stuart Mill bears witness to the effect of this controversy on his own political thinking. He saw that there was much truth in Macaulay's criticism, and he was not satisfied with the way in which his father met it. In place of defending his article simply as an argument for parliamentary reform, the elder Mill seemed to be satisfied with it as laying down the main lines for a complete philosophy of government and treated Macaulay's criticism as "simply irrational."⁵ This, says Mill, made him realize that there was "something more fundamentally erroneous" in his father's "conception of philosophical method as applicable to politics" than he had supposed. And he goes on to explain in some detail how this led him to the method of political science which he formulates in the *Logic*.

There are, he says, four methods which have been used in the social sciences—the chemical, the geometrical, the physical, and the historical. The chemical, or experimental method is represented by Macaulay. It is impossible in the social sciences because in this field it is impossible to obtain the simple and controllable conditions without which there can be no conclusive experiment. The geometrical, or abstract method, represented by James Mill, errs by oversimplifying. It assumes that one factor, such as fear, or self-interest, is the universal cause of social phenomena—and this is obviously not the case. The valid method is a combination of induction and deduction. This Mill calls the "physical" or concrete deductive method. In Book III of the *Logic* he points out that there are three steps in the deductive method—direct induction, ratiocination, and verification. The concrete deductive method as applied to social science consists in finding out by deduction what results might be expected to be produced in given circumstances from the laws of human

⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 134.

nature as we know them, and then verifying the conclusion by a comparison with actual situations:

"The ground of confidence in any concrete deductive science is not the *a priori* reasoning itself, but the accordance between its results and those of observation *a posteriori*. Either of these processes, apart from the other, diminishes in value as the subject increases in complication, and this is in so rapid a ratio as soon to become entirely worthless; but the reliance to be placed in the concurrence of the two sorts of evidence, not only does not diminish in anything like the same proportion, but is not necessarily much diminished at all."⁶

Political Economy is the outstanding example of a department of Social Science in which the concrete deductive method may be used. What people will do in certain economic situations may be deduced from a few simple laws of Political Economy, and if people are actually found, in real situations, to do as predicted, the laws are to that extent verified.

This is the direct concrete deductive method. But, following a suggestion which he got from Auguste Comte, Mill points out that in dealing with the more complex social problems the method must be used inversely. This he calls the Inverse Deductive or "Historical" Method. It differs

"from the more common form of the Deductive Method in this—that instead of arriving at its conclusions by general reasoning, and verifying them by specific experience (as is the natural order in the deductive branches of physical science), it obtains its generalizations by a collation of specific experience, and verifies them by ascertaining whether they are such as would follow from known general principles."⁷

So much for Mill's method. As for his conclusions on matters political he tells us in the *Autobiography* that after about 1830:

"the only substantial changes of opinion that were yet to come, related to politics, and consisted, on one hand, in a greater approxi-

⁶ *Logic*, p. 620.

⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 147.

mation, so far as regards the ultimate prospects of humanity, to a qualified Socialism, and on the other, a shifting of my political ideal from pure democracy, as commonly understood by its partisans, to the modified form of it, which is set forth in my *Consideration on Representative Government*.”⁸

He suggests that this development in his “practical political creed” could be shown by comparing the first review of de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, written in 1835, with the review of 1840, and with the essay on *Representative Government*.

The first review of de Tocqueville appeared in the *London Review* for October, 1835. (Vol. 31 of the *Westminster Review*.) Mill’s interest is still in the machinery of government, and he recounts with a good deal of enthusiasm de Tocqueville’s exposition of the workings of the various parts of the Constitution of the United States. The chief problem of democracy, as he sees it at this time, is to get the people to choose the right leaders. If they can do that, and then leave things in the leaders’ hands, all will be well. He says:

“The idea of a rational democracy is, not that people themselves govern, but that they have *security* for good government. This security they cannot have by other means than by retaining in their own hands the ultimate control. . . . Provided good intentions can be secured, the best government (need it be said?) must be the government of the wisest, and these must always be the few. The people ought to be the masters, but they are masters who must employ servants more skillful than themselves; like a ministry when they employ a military commander, or a military commander when he employs an army surgeon.”⁹

The two principal dangers of democracy, as de Tocqueville sees them are, (1) that the best men will not be elected to office, and (2) that the rights of minorities will be abused by the majority in power. Neither of these dangers

⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 134.

⁹ *Westminster Review*, Vol. 31. p. 110.

seemed to Mill very serious at this time. The first defect he thinks is not inherent in democracy, but as far as America is concerned, is due to the fact that the American government has no serious problems to face, and great leadership is not called for. About the second objection, which later on seemed to him so important, he says, in the first place, that people in the United States all have so much the same interests that "it is not easy to see what sort of a minority it can be over which the majority can have any interest in tyrannizing." The only cases he can think of where there would be any great danger are in matters of race and religion. The real danger is the danger of tyranny over opinion. A dead level of education and ideas is a state of things not at all desirable. And this seems to be the condition in America. No country, according to Mill, "has so few uninstructed persons, or fewer persons who are highly instructed."¹⁰ But there is a cure for this. "In the existence of a leisured class, we see the great salutary corrective of all the inconveniences to which democracy is liable."¹¹

In the review which is reprinted in *Dissertations and Discussions*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in October, 1840, both these dangers seemed to Mill more formidable. De Tocqueville had pointed out that democracy is bound to come to grief in a country where, though there may be equality among the people, the people have not been trained to take an intelligent part in government and leave all the administrations in the hands of the central authority. This is the situation in France, according to de Tocqueville, where the people have so few political duties to perform that those which occasionally come their way are performed with little intelligence and interest. In the United States, on the other hand, so much of the actual administration of local affairs is in the hands of the people themselves, that they

¹⁰ *Westminster Review*, Vol. 31. p. 118.

¹¹ *Westminster Review*, Vol. 31. p. 124.

keep themselves informed about political matters. Government is a real part of their lives. They can talk about politics fluently, and vote intelligently. Such, at least, was the America that de Tocqueville saw in 1830.

This part of de Tocqueville's book made more and more impression upon Mill as he thought more about it, and has more attention in the second review than in the first. The failure of the reform party to find a leader after their triumph of 1832, which he so bitterly laments in the *Autobiography*, brought this very near home. He was seeing more clearly all the time that the success of democracy depends after all not on theoretical checks to protect the people from being misgoverned by those whom they elect to rule over them (a consideration which had seemed very important before the Reform Bill), but on developing on the positive side, constructive leadership. So it was that training for democracy seemed more important in Mill's eyes. And de Tocqueville's picture of the New England local government, with its town meeting and wide distribution of local administrative powers, provided a valuable clue. The arrangement for the administration of the English Poor Law, under the Poor Law Commissioners, where the actual administration was done locally and the central body acted only in an advisory capacity seemed to indicate that the same sort of arrangement, even if on a very much smaller scale, might work in England.

As for the matter of the "tyranny of the majority," while Mill still felt there was danger from this quarter, he did not make much progress in its solution until later on.

III.

It was with this background that Mill worked out the more complete political philosophy that we find in the *Essay on Representative Government*. The success of any type of government, he says, depends on the good qualities of the

governed, their "industry, integrity, justice, and prudence,"¹² their willingness and ability to co-operate intelligently. The test of a good government is how far it tends to foster in the people these desirable qualities.¹³ This is important not only because the well-being of the people is the sole object of government, but because these good qualities supply the motive power that makes the machinery go. A passage in Mill's diary brings out this same point:

"In government, perfect freedom of discussion in all its modes—speaking, writing, and printing—in law and in fact is the first requisite of good because the first condition of popular intelligence and mental progress. All else is secondary. A form of government is good chiefly in proportion to the security it affords for the possession of this. Therefore mixed governments, or those which set up several concurrent powers in the State, which are occasionally in conflict and never exactly identical in opinions and interests, and each of which is interested in protecting the opinions and demonstrations of opinions which the others dislike, are generally preferable to simple forms of government, or those which establish one power (though it be that of the majority) supreme over all the rest, and thence able, and probably inclined, to put down all the writing and speaking which thwarts its purposes."¹⁴

This is the first element in a good government. The second has to do with the machinery itself—that is, how far it is "adapted to take advantage of the good qualities which may at any time exist, and make them instrumental to the right purposes."¹⁵

Democracy is the only form of government which can fulfill these two conditions. A despotism, no matter how good and how wise the despot, would be a bad form of government, because it would not develop the people:

"A good despotism means a government in which, so far as depends on the despot, there is no positive oppression by officers

¹² *Representative Government*, p. 187.

¹³ *Representative Government*, p. 193.

¹⁴ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 379.

¹⁵ *Representative Government*, p. 193.

of state, but in which all the collective interests of the people are managed for them, all the thinking that has relation to collective interests done for them, and in which their minds are formed by, and consenting to, this abdication of their own energies. Leaving things to the Government, like leaving them to Providence, is synonymous with caring nothing about them, and accepting their results when disagreeable as visitations of Nature. With the exception, therefore, of a few studious men who take an intellectual interest in speculation for its own sake, the intelligence and sentiments of the whole people are given up to the material interests, and when these are provided for, to the amusement and ornamentation of private life. But to say this is to say, if the whole testimony of history is worth anything, that the era of national decline has arrived; that is, if the nation had ever attained anything to decline from.”¹⁶

Having established the fact that democracy is the type of government best adapted to foster and develop these “good qualities” in the governed, Mill comes back to the two dangers which he has discussed in the two earlier articles referred to above. On the problem of getting the best men elected to office, he has a good deal to say. His conclusion is that both in an aristocracy and in a democracy government will be by people not definitely trained to govern. Only in a bureaucracy do you achieve government by a class of men trained for this special end.¹⁷ It must be admitted that a “bureaucratic government has, in some respects, greatly the advantage. It accumulates experience, acquires well-trying and well-considered traditional maxims, and makes provision for appropriate practical knowledge in those who have the actual conduct of affairs.”¹⁸ The trouble with this type of government is that there is no chance for originality, no chance to try new ways of doing things. “The disease which afflicts bureaucratic governments, and which they usually die of, is routine.” And so democracy is to be preferred,

¹⁶ *Representative Government*, p. 204.

¹⁷ *Representative Government*, p. 246.

¹⁸ *Representative Government*, p. 246.

even though there may be an apparent loss in efficiency. But this defect is not inherent in democracy. If the machinery of government is ordered aright, there is no reason why the best people available should not be elected to office.

The second danger is that of the tyranny of the majority. Macaulay, as has been pointed out above, saw this as a flaw in James Mill's theory of democracy. De Tocqueville saw the practical danger in the United States. By the time that John Stuart Mill came to write the *Essay on Representative Government* he had become more convinced that there was real danger from this quarter. He points out a number of cases where it would be to the interest of the majority, at least to their immediate interest, to oppress the minority. It was at this point in the development of his thought that Mill came upon Hare's scheme of proportional representation, which seemed to him at one stroke to solve this whole question, and to have numerous other beneficial effects.

The "Pure idea of democracy," Mill says, is the "government of the whole people by the whole people, equally represented. Democracy as commonly conceived and hitherto practised is the government of the whole people by a mere majority of the people, exclusively represented. The former is synonymous with the equality of all citizens; the latter, strangely confounded with it, is a government of privilege, in favour of the numerical majority, who alone possess practically any voice in the State. This is the inevitable consequence of the manner in which the votes are now taken, to the complete disfranchisement of minorities." ¹⁹

The cure of this abuse is a simple matter. It is to give minorities a representation in proportion to their numerical strength. The representatives of the minority will be outvoted when it comes to a show-down, but at least they will have an opportunity to be heard.

This can be effected, Mill thinks, simply by a change

¹⁹ *Representative Government*, p. 256.

"in the manner in which the votes are now taken." The particular form in the manner of electing representatives which Mill advocated was "Mr. Hare's Scheme." This plan provided that:

(1) "The unit of representation, the quota of electors who would be entitled to have a member to themselves" would be ascertained by dividing the number of voters by the seats in the House of Commons.

(2) The votes would be cast locally, but any person could vote for any candidate, "in whatever part of the country he might offer himself."

(3) Under this arrangement it is clear that any given candidate might get either less or more than a sufficient number of votes to elect him. To provide for this each elector includes on his ballot second, third, fourth, etc., choices. If the candidate of his first choice gets too few votes to be elected, his vote goes to the candidate of his second choice. But the candidate of his first choice may receive more than enough votes to elect him. In this case "to obtain the full number of members required to complete the House, as well as to prevent very popular candidates from engrossing nearly all the suffrages," the second choice would be counted on all those ballots over and above the minimum required for election. There are certain obvious imperfections in this scheme as here outlined, but these are taken care of by special provisions.

This desire on Mill's part to give minorities representation is another example of his eagerness to provide everyone with opportunities for self-expression. Complete self-expression cannot be had without representation in the field of government. Furthermore, minority representation is valuable from the point of view of society. Mill would apply here what he said in the *Liberty* about the expression of unpopular opinions. They may be right, or they may be partly right; and even if they are wrong, the opposition they

provide will force the majority to be more critical about their own position. So Mr. Hare's plan has several advantages. For one thing, it would force the party in power to put up better candidates. "The majority would insist on having a candidate worthy of their choice, or they would carry their votes somewhere else, and the minority would prevail."²⁰ For another thing, if the minority opinion could be presented by a strong champion in the legislature, it would have more chance of being understood and justly estimated; "the opposing ranks would meet face to face and hand to hand, and there would be a fair comparison of their intellectual strength in the presence of the country."²¹ The minority representatives in the assembly would be "the appropriate organ of a great social function," namely, the "function of Antagonism."²² A certain amount of conflict within a community is essential if it is to continue progressive. History shows this. When in the case of rival powers in history "the victory on either side was so complete as to put an end to the strife, and no other conflict took its place, first stagnation followed, and then decay."²³

Another scheme that Mill advocates is that of giving certain individuals a plurality of votes. The qualification for this would be on the basis of education. And as there is no "trustworthy system of general examination," education would be "tested directly," by the nature of a person's occupation. Members of the educated professions and graduates of universities would be given a plurality of votes.

The later devices that Mill suggests do not seem very practical. Both Hare's scheme and the plan for plurality of votes for the educated are of the sort to lend themselves to serious abuses in the hands of practical politicians. But

²⁰ *Representative Government*, p. 265.

²¹ *Representative Government*, p. 267.

²² *Representative Government*, p. 267.

²³ *Representative Government*, p. 268.

they do show very plainly what the whole story of the development of Mill's political thought shows—that Mill had gotten well away from the doctrinaire democracy of his predecessors, and was really trying to work out a type of government which, both for the sake of the individual and for the sake of society, would foster individual development.

IV.

This same interest on Mill's part, from a somewhat different angle, is shown in his writings on the position of women. Mill was not primarily interested in giving women the vote. That was a mere incident. What he wanted was that women should have the same freedom and the same opportunities that men have for self-culture and self-development. Mill's two essays on this subject cover much the same ground. The essay on the *Enfranchisement of Women* was published in the *Westminster Review* in 1851. In his prefatory note in the collected essays, Mill says that it was largely the work of Mrs. Mill, his own share in it being "little more than that of an editor and amanuensis."²⁴ The *Subjection of Women*, a longer essay, was written in 1861 but not published until 1869.

The position of women, Mill holds, is a kind of slavery, a relic of barbarism. It is due to the fact that men are physically stronger, and the institutions based on man's physical superiority have been perpetuated by custom. Thus the law gives the husband entire control over the person and property of his wife. In many cases this does not work hardship, on account of the affection that each bears to the other, but the situation is nevertheless bad. That it is not necessarily and always bad is no argument for it, any more than the fact that some slaveholders were kind to their slaves is an argument for slavery. There are three stages of morality:

²⁴ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III. p. 93.

the "morality of submission," when might makes right, and the weak do the bidding of the strong; the morality based on *chivalry*, where the stronger of his goodness is kind to the weaker; and the morality based on *justice*, where the weaker is given certain rights.²⁵ The morality of chivalry still obtains in the relation between men and women. Mill should not be understood as underestimating the value of chivalry. On the contrary, he has the highest regard for it. There is a large part of conduct in which it is to be man's guide. But the point he is making is that when weaker people have to depend on chivalry in place of the protection of legal rights, they fare badly.

On the question of the equality between men and women, Mill does not dogmatize. All he says is that you have no right to assume that the two sexes are fundamentally and innately different until you have exhausted every possibility of explaining their differences in terms of environmental factors.²⁶ It is true that Mill's inclination is to assume equality. Being born a man or being born a woman, and being born white or being born black, he speaks of in the same breath as being born a patrician or being born a plebian.²⁷ He believes that the differences between men and women can largely be explained by training. He quotes with approval Sydney Smith's suggestion that

"as long as boys and girls run about in the dirt and trundle hoops together, they are both precisely alike. If you catch up one-half of these creatures, and train them to a particular set of actions and opinions, and the other half to a perfectly opposite set, of course their understandings will differ, as one or the other sort of occupations has called this or that talent into action. There is surely no occasion to go into any deeper or more abstruse reasoning, in order to explain so very simple a phenomenon."²⁸

²⁵ *Subjection of Women*, pp. 94-95.

²⁶ *Subjection of Women*, p. 144.

²⁷ *Subjection of Women*, p. 35.

²⁸ Sydney Smith's *Works*, Vol. I. p. 200.

The fact that women have to depend for all they get on winning the approval of men, Mill thinks, makes them artificial and disingenuous, and explains most of the differences in character generally attributed to sex.

At the same time, he does admit certain differences between men and women. He says that it may be that men's brains are larger than the brains of women,²⁹ or that women are more "nervous than men."³⁰ This last may be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. It may explain the fact that women have more sense of the concrete and more power of "intuition"—that is, "a rapid and correct insight into present fact." (This has nothing to do, he says, with general principles. "Nobody ever perceived a scientific law of nature by intuition, nor arrived at a general rule of duty or prudence by it.")³¹ The skill of women as rulers both in Europe, at different times in history, and in India, where mothers were often regents for minor sons, made a great impression on Mill; as did also the anomaly that in England the only government position open to a woman was the highest one of all—that of Queen.³² Mill's final conclusion on this matter is that in whatever ways women may differ from men constitutionally, if they turn out to differ at all, there is as much chance that the peculiarities of women will be of advantage to them in the world of affairs, as that the contrary will be true. In any case, if women are left free from the trammels of custom and adverse legislation, they can be depended upon to find the place where they will fit in best.

The advantages of the recognition of equality between men and women are many. It will do away with the sufferings of many women at the hands of unkind husbands.³³ The

²⁹ *Subjection of Women*, p. 141.

³⁰ *Subjection of Women*, p. 133.

³¹ *Subjection of Women*, pp. 124-125.

³² *Subjection of Women*, p. 27.

³³ *Subjection of Women*, p. 173.

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present situation makes men tyrannical and overbearing and women submissive and dependent on artifice.³⁴ "The relation of superiors to dependents is the nursery of these vices of character."³⁵ Recognition of equality will do away with this. Furthermore, if women were free to enter business and the professions, society would gain, both because there would be more talent in the field, and because there would be more competition and therefore a higher standard set.

Women's votes will be on the side of adjustment of differences "not by fierce conflict, but by a succession of peaceful compromises."³⁶ And finally, the emancipation of women from their position of thralldom will mean the limitation of the number of children that will be born to them, and the reduction of the population.³⁷

Again we see Mill's interest in individuality, and his eagerness for that kind of freedom which will make the development of individuality possible. That women should be deprived of education, kept mere drudges in the home, not given the opportunity to take their rightful places in society, not allowed to vote, seemed to him an intolerable relic of barbarism. His hostility to the subjection of women had for its motive that same dominant interest in personality which was the basis of his interest in representative government. Whoever the individual might be—man or woman, rich or poor, educated or uneducated—what Mill wanted for him or her was more freedom for self development and more interest in self culture. For this he saw that a fair chance for self expression was essential, whether it be at the polls or in the broader fields of social interest.

³⁴ *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III. p. 122.

³⁵ *Subjection of Women*, p. 79.

³⁶ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 311.

³⁷ *Political Economy*, Vol. II. p. 349; *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 303.



Chapter VII.

Liberty and Individuality.

I.

In the *Autobiography* Mill speaks of a "remarkable American," Josiah Warren, as being one of the pioneers of personal liberty. It was from him that he borrowed the phrase "the sovereignty of the individual."¹ It is difficult to say just how much Mill knew about Josiah Warren, or how much influence the American had on the Englishman. But Warren is an interesting person for his own sake, and affords an interesting example of the kind of reaction that was taking place in the middle of the Nineteenth century against the various schemes of Utopian Socialism which had sprung up in such abundance just before. His experience was the sort which would further impress on Mill's mind the lesson of the importance of individual freedom. Josiah Warren had been a member of the community which Robert Owen started in 1826 at New Harmony, Indiana, on the banks of the Wabash. Owen's experiment failed ignominiously, because the people did not have sufficient thrift and industry to prosper under a communistic regime. Warren had all Owen's faith that a new system of social organization could be achieved, but, having learned a lesson from the failure at New Harmony, he tried another plan, and in 1851 founded the village of Modern Times on Long Island, based on the principle of individual sovereignty. Private property was

¹ *Autobiography*, p. 179.

his watchword, and everybody was free to do just as he pleased as long as he did not interfere with others and was able and willing to take the consequences of his actions. His community had a picturesque and checkered history. One man advocated plurality of wives, another believed clothing to be superfluous "and not only attempted to practise his Adamic theories in person, but inflicted his views upon his hapless children." A woman with an "ungainly form" wore men's attire. Another young woman was "so obsessed with a diet mania that, after trying to live on beans without salt until she was reduced almost to a skeleton, she died within a year."² The people wore whatever pleased their fancy. It is noted that the women showed more ingenuity in the matter of clothes than the men. A visitor from England wrote that going to church on Sunday in "Modern Times" was like going to a fancy dress ball.

The following quotation from Warren's paper, the *Peaceful Revolutionist*, throws light on the theoretical aspect of his individualism:

"Throughout the whole of our operations at this village, everything has been conducted so nearly on the *Individual* basis, that not one meeting for legislation has taken place. No organization, no delegated power, no constitutions, no laws or by-laws, rules or regulations, but such as each individual makes for himself and his own business; no officers, no priests nor prophets have been resorted to; nothing of this kind has been in demand.

"I do not mean to be understood that all are of one mind. On the contrary, in a progressive state there is no demand for conformity. We build on *Individuality*; any difference between us confirms our position. Differences, therefore, like the admissible discords in music, are a valuable part of our harmony. It is only when the rights of persons or property are actually invaded that collisions arise. These rights being clearly defined and sanctioned by public opinion, and temptations to encroachments being withdrawn, we may then consider our great problem practically solved. With regard to mere differences of opinion in taste, convenience, economy, equality, or even right and wrong, good and bad, sanity

² Baillie, *Josiah Warren*, pp. 60-61.

and insanity—all must be left to the supreme decision of each *Individual*, whenever he can take on himself the *cost* of his decision; which he cannot do while his interests or movements are united or combined with others. It is in combination or close connection only, that compromise and conformity are required. Peace, harmony, ease, security, happiness, will be found only in *Individuality*.”³

However little or however much Mill knew about Warren’s community, the latter’s emphasis on individuality was of precisely the sort Mill was interested in. Whatever else it did, it put a premium on diversity, spontaneity, and competition as factors in the development of personality.

But one thing must be noted about Warren’s liberalism. It was built on the foundations of Owen’s socialistic community, and Warren had not gone as far toward the other as he thought he had. He had to assume honesty and a certain common purpose among the members of his group, to say nothing of a common willingness to be different. If the development of individuality is to mean anything at all, there must be in the social structure a foundation of order and security, and this means submission of the individual to the will of society in a good many matters, and the limitation of individuality by public opinion or by law. Thus Warren says in the passage quoted above, that in Modern Times rights of property are “clearly defined and sanctioned by public opinion.” This suggests that the reason that he was able to make his system of society work was that in spite of the superficial differences the members of his community really agreed on the fundamental matters of social organization after all.

And this brings us to a problem which seemed to Mill very important and to the solution of which he devoted much time and energy. The motive behind Mill’s economic and political doctrine is so to order social life as to help the

³ Noyes, *American Socialisms*, p. 98.

development of individuality. For this freedom is necessary. [That spontaneity and diversity which alone can make life interesting and worth while can only come about when individuals are left free to manage their own lives in their own ways.] But the liberties of one person very often conflict with the liberties of another, or—more important still—the social regulations designed to protect the liberties of all interfere with the liberty of some. [The problem which presented itself to Mill was that of finding a principle on the basis of which to draw the line between the field in which the individual should be free to do as he pleases and the field when his actions could properly be regulated by society.]

To discover such a principle is the avowed purpose of the Essay on *Liberty*. Mill's answer is familiar. It is that

[“the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”⁴

But in his attempt to apply his principle Mill fails, as he had failed in *Ethology*, and in his other attempts at a universal science of life. [Mill's view pictures individuals as a lot of separate units, little atoms if you like, each animated by certain expanding wants and desires of its own. These conflict, to a certain extent, but there is a vastly larger field where they do not conflict, but rather assist and help satisfy the wants and desires of each other.] The problem in terms of the association psychology is to regulate the behaviour of each unit by means of laws, duties and sanctions, so there will be as little conflict as possible. [So much Mill inherited from Bentham and his father. He would add that another thing to be done was by means of education in the broadest

⁴ *Liberty*, p. 73.

sense to deepen and enrich the field where individual desires do not conflict, but rather aid and further each other.

It is not the purpose of this chapter either to undertake a thorough criticism of Mill's principle and the point of view that underlies it, or to review the criticisms that have been made. There are, however, certain difficulties which it will serve our purpose to bring out. In the first place it should be noted that it is impossible to make a clear-cut distinction between a person's private affairs and those of his doings which affect society. A sharp line cannot be drawn. As Fitzjames Stephen says, it is like trying to distinguish between acts done in space and acts done in time. As soon as you get a conception of society which takes account of the interdependence of individuals, you see that anything affecting one individual affects to some extent every other individual. Mill half realizes this. He says: "When I say only himself I mean directly and in the first instance; for whatever affects himself, may affect others through himself."⁵ He admits that "no person is an entirely isolated being; it is impossible for a person to do anything seriously or permanently hurtful to himself, without mischief reaching at least to his near connections, and often far beyond them":⁶

"I fully admit that the mischief which a person does to himself may seriously affect, both through their sympathies and their interests, those nearly connected with him, and, in a minor degree, society at large. When, by conduct of this sort, a person is led to violate a distinct and assignable obligation to any other person or persons, the case is taken out of the self-regarding class, and becomes amenable to moral disapprobation in the proper sense of the term."⁷

"But with regard to the merely contingent, or, if as it may be called, constructive injury which a person causes to society, by conduct which neither violates any specific duty to the public, nor occasions perceptible hurt to any assignable individual except

⁵ *Liberty*, p. 75.

⁶ *Liberty*, p. 136.

⁷ *Liberty*, pp. 137-138.

himself, the inconvenience is one which society can afford to bear, for the sake of the greater good of human freedom. If grown persons are to be punished for not taking proper care of themselves, I would rather it were for their own sake, than under pretence of preventing them from impairing their capacity of rendering to society benefits which society does not pretend it has a right to exact."⁸

If we look simply at Mill's formal argument, it is easy to convict him of getting out of this difficulty by begging the question. "What," he asks, "is the rightful limit to the sovereignty of the individual over himself? Where does the authority of society begin? How much of human life should be assigned to individuality, and how much to society?"⁹ The limit is reached, he says, when the person is "led to violate a distinct and assignable obligation," or when he "violates any specific duty to the public." We know this already. What we have been trying to find out is, what obligations should be assigned, and what duties should be specified by the public.

II.

But we must not be satisfied with such an easy victory. This is obviously a slip on Mill's part, and his real meaning will be missed if we rest satisfied with a superficial analysis. To get at the root of Mill's difficulty it will be necessary to examine somewhat more closely the nature of the principle he tries to employ.

There are three ways in which one may try to use a principle such as this principle of Mill's. One may try to use it as a rule, by which automatically to decide questions which involve a conflict between the individual and society; or one may use it as a statement of a goal, of an ideal; or finally one may use it as a reminder and an exhortation. Take a simpler case by way of illustration—the command-

⁸ *Liberty*, p. 138.

⁹ *Liberty*, p. 131.

ment "Thou shalt do no murder." If we accept this as a sort of geometrical axiom and try to deduce from it what kind of killing is murder and what is not, we get into all kinds of trouble. Obviously, there are certain cases of killing which would not be said to constitute murder. But if we try to find out from the command what does and what does not constitute murder, we will simply be deceiving ourselves and giving a sort of divine sanction to our previously held opinions and prejudices. Murder is really the kind of killing which, in any stage of enlightenment, is felt by people generally to be socially undesirable. Just what constitutes murder is to be found out not dialectically, but by a study of the facts. This will mean that it is impossible to draw any hard and fast line in general terms between what is murder and what is not. But that does not mean that we may all go around killing people. The moral precept "Thou shalt do no murder" can still be used as a statement of an aim—an ideal—with the understanding that the *content* is to be determined by study of concrete cases. This is an illustration of the second way a principle may be used—that is, to express an aim. The third use is perhaps not very different from the foregoing. The commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder," may be used homiletically as it were, as an exhortation, a reminder, to keep before people the desirability of not killing their fellow men.

The same analysis may be applied to Mill's self-protection principle. Take for example the position of someone who had to vote on the Eighteenth Amendment when it came up in 1918. Assume that he tries to let his conduct be guided by Mill's principle. "Shall I vote for the amendment or not?" he asks himself. Then he enunciates to himself the principle. "If the use of liquor is an individual question, I must vote against the amendment," he would have to say. "If it is a question where the acts of the individual have bad social effects I must vote for it." When the

matter is stated in this way, certain things are clear. In the first place drinking obviously affects both the individual and society. The real question is not which does it affect, as a matter of fact, but which effect should be regarded as more important for the purpose of the law. That is, the principle is of value as an aim, as an ideal. But just how to apply it to a given situation remains to be seen. And in solving this question, the principle as something from which an answer may be deduced, does not give any help at all. What the legislator will have to do is to look about him, get definite information about definite conditions, and on the basis of this concrete material make up his mind whether the passage of the amendment would be for the social good or not. But here the principle might come in again as a reminder to the legislator not to forget the value of freedom for its own sake, and not to think so much of social advantage and disadvantage in terms of public health and national prosperity and the birth rate and death rate as to forget that there is a real value in letting individuals work out their own problems and live their own lives as far as it is possible to do so.

So it was when Mill tried to apply this principle himself. As a general principle from which to deduce other principles it did not get him anywhere. His significant use of it was in the second and third of the ways mentioned above, to emphasize the value of liberty when it came to the deciding of questions where individual liberty conflicted with social organization. His principle was a doctrine called forth by the times—a sort of publicity scheme used (unconsciously on Mill's part) to keep advertising the importance for its own sake of individual freedom.

The same criticism might be applied to this principle of Mill's which he applied to his father's doctrine of universal selfishness as a basis for a philosophy of government. It was primarily a doctrine of reform. As an argument

for more liberty of thought and discussion, more freedom from the restraint by convention of our daily lives, it had a real effectiveness. If John Stuart Mill had been willing to admit that he was simply trying to defend the individual against too much social control he would have been on more certain ground. But he made the mistake which James Mill made before him, of claiming for his principle universal applicability. This brings us back to where we started from, and enables us to see that the real motive behind Mill's criterion was the desire to emphasize and protect individuality, to point out that in any weighing and balancing of advantages, that must not be left out.

It may be remarked incidentally that the same analysis may be applied to the greatest happiness principle itself. Its meaning depends upon what one considers happiness. A person who values liberty more highly than he does security or ease or physical comfort will develop a very different system of ethics from it than will the person who puts security and the rest first. This is another difference between John Stuart Mill and Bentham. Though both pay homage to the greatest happiness principle, Mill rates liberty high in his scale of values, whereas for Bentham it is a long way down on the list.

But to go back to Mill's principle for determining the proper limits for society's control over the individual, it should be pointed out that the real trouble with a principle like this is that it makes it possible for a person to decide questions on the basis of prejudice, calling it deduction from the principle, in place of realizing and facing the importance of studying the specific problems in concrete terms. There is danger of the same trouble which Mill saw so clearly in the philosophy of the intuitionists. Mill, to be sure, did realize the need of a study of concrete situations. In his economic and political writings, as we have seen, he resolutely tried to study conditions as they were. But he

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was never willing to let the ultimate solution of his problem come simply out of the situation itself. He felt that he had to go back to his principle for an ultimate sanction.

A distinction similar to that we have just made is made by Professor Dewey in almost the same terms. He says:

"The fundamental error of the intuitionist and of the utilitarian is that they are on the lookout for rules which will of themselves tell agents just what course of action to pursue; whereas the object of moral principles is to supply standpoints and methods which will enable the individual to make for himself an analysis of the elements of good and evil in the particular situation in which he finds himself."¹⁰

Again he says:

"A moral principle, then, is not a command to act or forbear acting in a given way: it is a tool for analyzing a special situation, the right or wrong being determined by the situation in its entirety, and not by the rule as such."¹¹

Mill never made this distinction between a rule and a principle in Professor Dewey's sense. He talked as if the self-protection principle was a rule; but when it came to the application of it to concrete situations, his decisions were determined by the factors which went to make up the situation.

III.

There are certain crucial instances of Mill's attempt to apply this principle, where it may be seen quite clearly that the basis of his decision lies not in the principle itself but in various other factors. These examples illustrate two things—first the failure of the approach in terms of the association psychology and the universal doctrine of ends, and second the fact that Mill really decided these questions with considerable wisdom and common sense, on the basis of his

¹⁰ Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, p. 333.

¹¹ Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, p. 334.

interest in personality. Take the case of children for instance. Mill believes in the supervision of children "for their own good" and for that of society.¹² He has to begin by admitting that this is an exception to the general principle. If his principle was really to be determinative universally he would have to show where to draw the line between children and grown-ups, obviously a difficult matter. To fall back on the "age which the law may fix as that of manhood and womanhood" is an unsatisfactory way out. But from the point of view of common sense and an interest in personality, clearly children need more supervision than adults. They must be taught to respect the personality of others. They must be sent to school. They must be made to conform to certain of the more necessary conventions of the society in which they live.

Or take the case of uncivilized peoples, where Mill's experiences at the India House come to the front. This is another exception. Mill says "despotism is a legitimate mode of dealing with barbarians." But it is a difficult matter to tell just who are barbarians and who can be called civilized. In the essay on *Representative Government*, Mill gives certain criteria on the basis of which to judge whether a people is capable of self-government or not, but it is impossible to draw a sharp line. And he says, "Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion."¹³ To such an admission does Mill's principle lead him! As we saw in the last chapter, the thing in which Mill is really interested in his philosophy of government is the development of individuality. His distinction between those who are capable of self-government and those who are not is a consistent part of this philosophy. He would have done better, at least from a

¹² *Liberty*, p. 73.

¹³ *Liberty*, p. 73.

logical point of view, to have admitted that this was his criterion than to have attempted to make an artificial connection between his conclusion and his principle of liberty.

Two other examples of a different sort provide further illustrations of the fact that the determining factor in Mill's solution of concrete problems of conflict between the individual and society was his interest in individuality. One is the question of drunkenness. Mill starts in by saying that drinking is an individual matter. The State should not prohibit it. But if a person once committed a crime under the influence of liquor, he

"should be placed under a special legal restriction, personal to himself; that if he were afterward found drunk, he should be liable to a penalty, and that if when in that state he committed another offense, the punishment to which he would be liable for that offense should be increased in severity. The making himself drunk, in a person drunkenness excites to do harm to others, is a crime against others."¹⁴

The State should not "tax stimulants for the sole purpose of making them more difficult to be obtained," because it is a measure "differing only in degree from their entire prohibition." But, on the other hand, the State has to levy some taxes. In doing this it should select for taxation those things "of which it deems the use, beyond a very moderate quantity, to be positively injurious." "Taxation, therefore, of stimulants, up to the point which produces the largest amount of revenue (supposing that the State needs all the revenue which it yields) is not only admissible, but to be approved of." The regulations with regard to places where liquor is sold should be simply for the purpose of keeping the peace.¹⁵

Taking it simply as the basis of social advantage, and bearing in mind that, other things being equal, the freedom of the individual to do what he likes in the interest of indi-

¹⁴ *Liberty*, p. 153.

¹⁵ *Liberty*, p. 156.

viduality is to be fostered, Mill's conclusion in the first part of the above paragraph sounds like common sense. But his attempt to make it appear that his conclusion is a deduction from his principle is labored, to say the least.

The second example has to do with the question of marriage. One might well expect Mill to regard marriage as above all other matters the personal concern of the two people involved. His own friendship for Mrs. Taylor he regarded as nobody's business but his and hers. He speaks of it as a matter "so entirely personal" that they did not think the "ordinances of society" binding with regard to it.¹⁶ Yet Mill felt most strongly the importance for society of restricting the population, and to this end not only advocated education and self-restraint, but approved of laws prohibiting marriage until the prospective husband could show that he had sufficient means to rear a family according to a decent standard of living.¹⁷

A correspondent (Dr. MacCormac, of Belfast) wrote to him and asked him about this. Writing from Avignon under date of December 4, 1865, Mill replies:

"Dear Sir: In answer to your letter of 29th November, I would say, that restrictions on marriage, or on any other human action, when so conducted as to be directly injurious to others than the agents themselves, do not appear to me objectionable on the principle of liberty. For all our actions which affect the interests of other people I hold that we are morally, and may without violation of principle be made legally, responsible. I have, however, expressly guarded myself against being understood to mean that legal restrictions on marriage are *expedient*. That is an altogether different question, to which I conceive no universal and peremptory answer can be given, and in deciding which for any particular case due weight ought to be given to the probability of consequences of the kind you mention, as well as of any other kinds."¹⁸

¹⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 161.

¹⁷ Cf. Leslie Stephen, *English Utilitarians*, Vol. III. p. 228.

¹⁸ *Letters*, Vol. II. p. 48.

This is a case in which it is more than ever clear that the distinction between what affects the individual and what affects other people is purely formal. Every action affects both the agent himself and other people. In some cases the effect upon the agents is the more important, in other cases the effect on other people is to be most considered. In questions where the two are closely balanced, as here, which way the decision will go depends upon the interests and prejudices of the person doing the judging. It is clear that in this question of marriage the deciding factor in determining Mill's opinion was his interest in the limitation of the population, which was closely related, on the one hand, to the economic questions we have discussed above, and on the other to his desire to protect women, for the sake of fuller development of personality, from excessive child bearing with the pain and drudgery that it involves. His conclusion was not really deduced from his principle at all.

IV.

In the last book of the *Political Economy* there is a discussion of the "Ground and Limits of the Laisser-faire or Non-interference Principle" in which Mill takes up this same question with particular reference to economic problems. "No subject," he says, "has been more keenly contested in the present age," and he goes on to summarize some of the things that have been said. He then says for himself, significantly enough:

"Without professing entirely to supply this deficiency of a general theory, on a question *which does not, as I conceive, admit of any universal solution*, I shall attempt to afford some little aid towards the resolution of this class of questions as they arise, by examining, in the most general point of view in which the subject can be considered, what are the advantages and what the evils or inconveniences, of government interference."¹⁹

¹⁹ *Political Economy*, p. 559. *The italics are mine.* C. L. S.

He goes on to restate his principle:

"Whatever theory we adopt respecting the foundation of the social union, and under whatever political institutions we live, [there is a circle around every individual human being, which no government, be it that of one, of a few, or of the many, ought to be permitted to overstep;] there is a part of the life of every person who has come to years of discretion, within which the individuality of that person ought to reign uncontrolled either by any other individual or by the public collectively. That there is, or ought to be, some space in human existence thus entrenched around, and sacred from authoritative intrusion, no one who professes the smallest regard to human freedom or dignity will call in question: the point to be determined is, where the limit should be placed; how large a province of human life this reserved territory should include. I apprehend that it ought to include all that part which concerns only the life, whether inward or outward, of the individual, and does not affect the interests of others, or affects them only through the moral influence of example. . . . To be prevented from doing what one is inclined to, or from acting according to one's own judgment of what is desirable, is not only always irksome, but always tends, pro tanto, to starve the development of some portion of the bodily or mental faculties, either sensitive or active; and unless the conscience of the individual goes freely with the legal restraint, it partakes, either in a great or in a small degree, of the degradation of slavery. Scarcely any degree of utility, short of absolute necessity, will justify a prohibitory regulation, unless it can also be made to recommend itself to the general conscience; [unless persons of ordinary good intentions either believe already, or can be induced to believe, that the thing prohibited is a thing which they ought not to wish to do.]"

His position here seems to be essentially that which we have suggested above—that the purpose of the non-interference principle is primarily to protect the individual and the growth of individuality. He does not look upon it as a "universal solution." If Mill had seen this more clearly and had held to this position in his later work, he would have been spared much misunderstanding and criticism.

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²⁰ *Political Economy*, pp. 560-561.

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That in which Mill was most interested in all his work was the development of individuality. This was partly due to his own experience. The reaction from his strenuous and one-sided early education brought with it a period of mental depression which found a partial solution in some new and strong personal attachments, and a new interest in individuality. This was re-inforced by the whole reaction of the early nineteenth century against the intellectualism of the eighteenth. And with this came, though more slowly, a growing sense of the inadequacy of the political and social and economic philosophy of the Early Utilitarians satisfactorily to account for the richness and color and variety in life of which Mill's interest in individuality made him conscious. And so, whether it were in political economy, in the philosophy of government, or in his thought upon more general social questions, the final test of the value of any program was for him its effect on individuality. In the art of life (as opposed to the science of life) the guiding principle was for him as it was for his father and Jeremy Bentham the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But in interpreting the greatest happiness principle that which seemed to John Stuart Mill most important—far more important than mere physical well-being—was liberty, individuality, the freedom of the individual for the development of personality. People must have, to be sure, a sufficient amount of the physical necessities and conveniences of life, and a certain amount of economic independence. But more than this, they must have education, a share in government, and, if possible, a share in the direction of the industry in which they work. They must have a certain amount of opposition to overcome an incentive for self-improvement. They must be free to live their own lives as they see fit, and at the same time there must be protection against wanton interference on their part with the freedom of other people. John Stuart Mill's eye was fixed on indi-

viduality as his goal. His study and active effort on specific problems was always to see how in a particular matter the cause of individuality might be advanced. We of the twentieth century are only beginning to learn the two-fold lesson which he taught—the importance of the development of individuality in its richest diversity and the need of accurate and painstaking study of concrete problems to see how this may be achieved.

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Appendix

JOHN STUART MILL'S REVIEW OF
GEORGE CORNWALL LEWIS'

Use and Abuse of Political Terms.

Reprinted from *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. I (April to September, 1832), page 164 ff.*

*Use and Abuse of Political Terms.*¹

Mr. Lewis is known in society as the son of the Right Hon. T. Frankland Lewis, and in literature, as the translator, jointly with Mr. Henry Tufnell, of two erudite and interesting works on classical antiquity, Muller's *Dorians*, and Bockh's *Public Economy of Athens*. Mr. Lewis is also the author of a little work on logic; to which subject, stimulated like many others of the Oxford youth, by the precepts and example of Dr. Whately, he has devoted more than common attention, and was so far peculiarly qualified for writing such a work as the volume before us professes to be. This alone

¹ *Use and Abuse of Political Terms*. By George Cornwall Lewis, Esq., Student of Christ Church, Oxford. London: Fellowes, 1832.

* It seems worth while to reprint this review as it has never been reprinted and *Tait's Magazine* is difficult to procure. Mill's reference to the review in his letter to Carlyle in 1834, in which he says that it "paints exactly" the state of his "mind and feeling" at the time it was written, makes it of some biographical interest, and it throws a good deal of light on the broadening out of Mill's point of view which took place during these years.

should entitle him to no slight praise; for such is the present state of the human mind, in some important departments, that it is often highly meritorious to have written a book, in itself of no extraordinary merit, if the work afford proof that any one of the requisites for writing a good book on the same subject is possessed in an eminent degree.

Certain it is, that there scarcely ever was a period when logic was so little studied, systematically, and in a scientific manner, as of late years; while, perhaps, no generation ever had less to plead in extenuation of neglecting it. For if, in order to reason well, it were only necessary to be destitute of every spark of fancy and poetic imagination, the world of letters and thought might boast, just now, of containing few besides good reasoners; people to whom, one would imagine, that logic must be all in all, if we did not, to our astonishment, find that they despise it. But the most prosaic matter-of-fact person in the world must not flatter himself that he is able to reason because he is fit for nothing else. Reasoning, like all other mental excellencies, comes by appropriate culture; not by exterminating the opposite good quality, the other half of a perfect character. Perhaps the mere reasoners, with whom the world abounds, would be considerably less numerous, if men really took the pains to learn to reason. It is a sign of a weak judgment, as of a weak virtue, to take to flight at the approach of every thing which can, by any remote possibility, lead it astray. Men who, for want of cultivation, have the intellects of dwarfs, are, of course, the slaves of their imagination, if they have any, as they are the slaves of their sensations, if they have not; and it is partly, perhaps, because the systematic culture of the thinking faculty is in little repute, that imagination also is in such bad odour; there being no solidity and vigour of intellect to resist it where it tends to mislead. The sublimest of English poets composed an elementary book of logic for the schools; but our puny rhymsters think logic, forsooth,

too dry for them;² and our logicians, from that and other causes, very commonly say with M. Casimir Perier, *A quoi un poëte est-il bon?*

In undertaking to treat of the use and abuse of the leading terms of political philosophy, Mr. Lewis has set before himself a task to which no one but a logician could be competent, and one of the most important to which logic could be applied. If, however, we were disposed for minute criticism, we might find some scope for it in the very title-page. We might ask, what is meant by an abuse of terms; and whether a man is not at liberty to employ terms in any way which enables him to deliver himself of his own ideas the most intelligibly; to bring home to the minds of others, in the greatest completeness, the impression which exists in his own? This question, though it has a considerable bearing upon many parts of Mr. Lewis' book, throws, however, no doubt upon the importance of the object he aims at. His end is, to prevent *things* essentially different, from being confounded, because they happen to be called by the same *name*. It is past doubt that this, like all other modes of false and slovenly thinking, might be copiously exemplified from the field of politics; and Mr. Lewis has not been unhappy in his choice of examples. The instances, in which the confusion of lan-

² The greatest English poet of our own times lays no claim to this theory of thought. Those whom Mr. Wordsworth honours with his acquaintance, know it to be one of his favorite opinions, that want of proper intellectual culture, much more than the rarity of genius, is the cause why there are so few true poets; the foundation of poetry, as of all other productions of man's reason, being logic. By logic, he does not mean syllogisms in mode and figure, but justness of thought and precision of language; and, above all, knowing accurately your own meaning. While we are on this subject, we must be permitted to express our regret, that a poet who has meditated as profoundly on the theory of his art, as he has laboured assiduously in its practice, should have put forth nothing which can convey any adequate notion to posterity of his merits in this department; and that philosophical speculations on the subject of poetry, with which it would be folly to compare any others existing in our language, have profited only to a few private friends.

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guage is the consequence, and not the cause, of the erroneous train of thought (which we believe to be generally the more common case), are equally worthy of Mr. Lewis' attention, and will, no doubt, in time receive an equal share of it.

Some notion of the extent of ground over which our author travels may be gathered from his table of contents; which, with that view, we transcribe:

"1. Government. 2. Constitution—Constitutional. 3. Right—Duty—Wrong—Rightful—Wrongful—Justice. 4. Law—Lawful—Unlawful. 5. Sovereign—Sovereignty—Division of Forms of Government. 6. Monarchy—Royalty—King. 7. Commonwealth—Republic—Republican. 8. Aristocracy—Oligarchy—Nobility. 9. Democracy. 10. Mixed Government—Balance of Powers. 11. People—Community. 12. Representation—Representative—Representative Government. 13. Rich—Middle Class—Poor. 14. Nature—Natural—Unnatural—State of Nature. 15. Liberty—Freedom—Free. 16. Free Government—Arbitrary Government—Tyranny—Despotism—Anarchy. 17. Power—Authority—Force. 18. Public—Private—Political—Civil—Municipal. 19. Property—Possession—Estate—Estates of Parliament. 20. Community of Goods."

To explain thoroughly the various senses of any one of these terms, would require, possibly, as much space as Mr. Lewis has devoted to them all. His observations, however, are those of an instructed and intelligent mind. They contain, perhaps, not much that is absolutely new; except that ideas, which the mind has made completely its own, always come out in a form more or less different from that in which they went in, and are, in that sense, always original. Moreover, any one who can look straight into a thing itself, and not merely at its image mirrored in another man's mind, can also look at things, upon occasion, when there is no other man to point them out.³

³ Mr. Lewis has very properly, in our opinion, spared himself the ostentatious candour of mentioning the authors to whom he was indebted, they being mostly writers of established reputation. Such studious honesty in disclaiming any private right to truths which are the common property

Yet, highly as we think of this work, and still more highly of the author's capabilities, we will not pretend that he has realized all our conceptions of what such a work ought to be. We do not think he is fully conscious of what his subject requires of him. The most that he ever seems to accomplish, is to make out that something is wrong, but not how that which is wrong may be made right. He may say, that this is all he aimed at; and so, indeed, it is. But it may always be questioned, whether one has indeed cut down to the very root of an error, who leaves no truth planted in its stead. Mr. Lewis, at least, continually leaves the mind under the unsatisfactory impression, that the matter has not been probed to the bottom, and that underneath almost everything which he sees, there lies something deeper which he does not see. If in this we should be deemed hypercritical, we would say in our defense, that we should never think of ranging Mr. Lewis in the class of those, from whom we take thankfully and without asking questions, any trifling matter, which is all they have to bestow. The author of such a work as the present, is entitled to be tried by the same standard as the highest order of intellect; to be compared not with the small productions of small minds, but with ideal perfection.

Mankind have many ideas, and but few words. This truth should never be absent from the mind of one who takes upon him to decide if another man's language is philosophical or the reverse. Two consequences follow from it;

of mankind, generally implies either that the author cares, and expects the reader to care, more about the ownership of an idea than about its value; or else that he designs to pass himself off as the first promulgator of every thought which he does expressly assign to the true discoverer. This is one of the thousand forms of that commonest of egotisms, egotism under a show of modesty. The only obligations which Mr. Lewis with a just discrimination stops to acknowledge, are to a philosopher who is not yet so well known as he deserves to be, Mr. Austin, Professor of Jurisprudence in the University of London.

one, that a certain laxity in the use of language must be borne with, if a writer makes himself understood; the other, that, to understand a writer who is obliged to use the same words as a vehicle for different ideas, requires a vigorous effort of co-operation on the part of the reader. These unavoidable ambiguities render it easier, we admit, for confusion of ideas to pass undetected: but they also render it more difficult for any man's ideas to be so expressed that they shall not appear confused; particularly when viewed with that habitual contempt with which men of clear ideas generally regard those, any of whose ideas are not clear, and with that disposition which contempt, like every other passion, commonly carries with it, to presume the existence of its object. It should be recollected, too, that many a man has a mind teeming with important thoughts, who is quite incapable of putting them into words which shall not be liable to any metaphysical objection; that when this is the case, the logical incoherence or incongruity of the expression, is commonly the very first thing which strikes the mind, and that which there is least merit in perceiving. The man of superior intellect, in that case, is not he who can only see that the proposition precisely as stated, is not true; but he who, not overlooking the incorrectness at the surface, does, nevertheless, discern that there is truth at the bottom. The logical defect, on the other hand, is the only thing which strikes the eye of the mere logician. The proper office, we should have conceived, of a clear thinker, would be to make other men's thoughts clear for them, if they cannot do it for themselves, and to give words to the man of genius, fitted to express his ideas with philosophical accuracy. Socrates, in the beautiful dialogue called the *Phaedrus*, describes his own vocation as that of a mental midwife: not so Mr. A. or B., who, perhaps, owes the advantage of clear ideas to the fact of his having no ideas which it is at all difficult to make clear. The use of logic, it would seem, to such a

person, is not to help others, but to privilege himself against being required to listen to them. He will not think it worth his while to examine what a man has to say, unless it is put to him in such a manner that it shall cost him no trouble at all to make it out. If you come to him needing help, you may learn from him that you are a fool; but you certainly will not be made wise.

It would be grossly unjust to Mr. Lewis to accuse him of anything approaching to this; but we could have wished that his work could have been more decidedly cited as an example of the opposite quality. We desiderate in it somewhat more of what becomes all men, but, most of all, a young man, to whom the struggles of life are only in their commencement, and whose spirit cannot yet have been wounded, or his temper embittered by hostile collision with the world, but which, in young men more especially, is apt to be wanting—a slowness to condemn. A man must now learn, by experience, what once came almost by nature to those who had any faculty of seeing; to look upon all things with a benevolent, but upon great men and their works with a reverential spirit; rather to seek in them for what *he* may learn from *them*, than for opportunities of showing what they might have learned from him; to give such men the benefit of every possibility of their having spoken with a rational meaning; not easily or hastily to persuade himself that men like Plato, and Locke, and Rousseau, and Bentham, gave themselves a world of trouble in running after something which they thought was a reality, but which he, Mr. A. B., can clearly see to be an unsubstantial phantom; to exhaust every other hypothesis, before supposing himself wiser than they; and even then to examine, with good will and without prejudice, if their error do not contain some germ of truth; and if any conclusion, such as a philosopher can adopt, may even yet be built upon the foundation on which they, it may be, have reared nothing but an edifice of sand.

Such men are not refuted because they are convicted of using words occasionally with no very definite meaning, or even of founding an argument upon an ambiguity. The substance of correct reasoning may still be there, although there be a deficiency in the forms. A vague term, which they may never have given themselves the trouble to define, may yet, on each particular occasion have excited in their minds precisely the ideas it should excite. The leading word in an argument may be ambiguous; but between its two meanings there is often a secret link of connection, unobserved by the critic but felt by the author, though, perhaps, he may not have given himself a strictly logical account of it; and the conclusion may turn not upon what is different in the two meanings, but upon what they have in common, or at least analogous.

Until logicians know these things, and act as if they knew them, they must not expect that a logician and a captious man will cease to be, in common apprehension, nearly synonymous. How, in fact, can it be otherwise in the mind of a person, who knows not very clearly what logic is, but who finds that he can in no way give utterance to his conviction without infringing logical rules, while he is conscious all the time that the real grounds of the conviction have not been touched in the slightest degree?

It is only in a very qualified sense that these admonitions can be applied to Mr. Lewis; but there are so few persons of our time to whom they do not apply more or less (and, perhaps, there have been but few at any time), that we are not surprised to find them, even in his case, far from superfluous. It remains for us to establish this by particular instances.

Mr. Lewis, under the word *right*, gives a definition of legal rights, and then lays it down that all rights are the creatures of law, that is, of the will of the sovereign; that the sovereign himself has no rights, nor can any one have

rights as against the sovereign; because, being sovereign, he is by that supposition exempt from legal obligation, or legal responsibility. So far, so good. Mr. Lewis then says, that to call anything a right which cannot be enforced by law, is an abuse of language. We answer,—Not until mankind have consented to be bound by Mr. Lewis' definition. For example, when Dr. Johnson says that a man has not a *moral right* to think as he pleased, "because he ought to inform himself, and think justly," Mr. Lewis says he must mean *legal* right; and adds other observations, proving that he has not even caught a glimpse of Johnson's drift. Again according to him, whoever asserts that no man can have a *right* to do that which is *wrong*, founds an argument upon a mere ambiguity, confounding a right with the adjective *right*: and this ambiguity is "mischievous, because it serves as an inducement to error, and confounds things as well as words."

Now, we contend that Mr. Lewis is here censuring what he does not thoroughly understand, and that the use of the word *right*, in both these cases, is as good logic and as good English as his own. *Right* is the correlative of *duty*, or *obligation*; and (with some limitations) is co-extensive with those terms. Whatever any man is under an obligation to give you, or to do for you, to that you have a right. There are legal obligations, and there are consequently legal rights. There are also *moral* obligations; and no one that we know of considers this phrase an abuse of language, or proposed that it should be dispensed with. It seems, therefore, but an adherence to the established usage of our language, to speak of moral rights; which stand in the same relation to moral obligations as legal rights do to legal obligations. All that is necessary is to settle distinctly with ourselves, and make it intelligible to those whom we are addressing, which kind of rights it is that we mean; if we fail in which, we become justly liable to Mr. Lewis' censure. It has not totally

escaped Mr. Lewis that there may be some meaning in the phrase, moral rights; but he has, by no means, correctly hit that meaning. He expounds it thus,—“claims recommended by views of justice or public policy”; the sort of claim a man may be said to have to anything which you think it *desirable* that he should possess. No such thing. No man in his sound senses considers himself to be *wronged* every time he does not get what he *desires*; every man distinguishes between what he thinks another man *morally bound* to do, and what he merely *would like* to see him do; between what is morally criminal, a fit subject for complaint or reproach, and what excites only regrets, and a wish that the act had been abstained from. No system of moral philosophy or metaphysics that we ever heard of, denies this distinction; though several have undertaken to account for it, and to place it upon the right footing.

If you may say that it is the moral duty of subjects to obey their government, you may also express this by saying that government has a moral *right* to their obedience. If you may say that it is the moral duty of sovereigns to govern well, or else to abdicate, you may say that subjects have a right to be well governed. If you may say, that it is morally culpable in a government to attempt to retain its authority, contrary to the inclinations of its subjects; you may say, that the people have a right to change their government. All this, without any logical inaccuracy, or “abuse of language.” We are not defending this phraseology as the best that can be employed; the language of *right* and the language of *duty*, are logically equivalent, and the latter has, in many respects, the advantage. We are only contending, that, whoever used the word *right* shall not be adjudged guilty of nonsense, until it has been tried whether this mode of interpreting his meaning will make it sense. And this we complain that Mr. Lewis has not done.

To explain what we meant by saying that almost every-

thing which Mr. Lewis sees has something lying under it which he does not see, we have now to show, that, in catching at an imaginary ambiguity near the surface, he has missed the deeper and less obvious ambiguities by which men are really misled. Two of these we shall briefly set forth.

Speaking morally, you are said to have a right to do a thing, if all persons are morally bound not to hinder you from doing it. But, in another sense, to have a right to do a thing is the opposite of having *no* right to do it,—viz., of being under a moral obligation to forbear from doing it. In this sense, to say that you have a right to do a thing, means that you may do it without any breach of duty on your part; that other persons not only ought not to hinder you, but have no cause to think the worse of you for doing it. This is a perfectly distinct proposition from the preceding. The *right* which you have by virtue of a duty incumbent upon other persons, is obviously quite a different thing from a right consisting in the absence of any duty incumbent upon yourself. Yet the two things are perpetually confounded. Thus a man will say he has a right to publish his opinions; which may be true in this sense, that it would be a breach of duty in any other person to interfere and prevent the publication:—but he assumes thereupon, that in publishing his opinions, he himself violates no duty; which may either be true or false, depending, as it does, upon his having taken due pains to satisfy himself, first, that the opinions are true, and next, that their publication in this manner, and at this particular juncture, will probably be beneficial to the interests of truth, on the whole. In this sense of the word, a man has no *right* to do that which is *wrong*, though it may often happen that nobody has a right to *prevent* him from doing it.

The second ambiguity is that of confounding a right, of any kind, with a right to enforce that right by resisting or punishing a violation of it. Men will say, for example,

that they have a right to a good government; which is undeniably true, it being the moral duty of their governors to govern them well. But in granting this, you are supposed to have admitted their right or liberty to turn out their governors, and, perhaps, to punish them, for having failed in the performance of this duty; which, far from being the same thing, is by no means universally true, but depends upon an immense number of varying circumstances, and is, perhaps, altogether the knottiest question in practical ethics. This example involves *both* the ambiguities which we have mentioned.

We have dwelt longer on this one topic than the reader perhaps will approve. We shall pass more lightly over the remainder.

Our author treats with unqualified contempt all that has been written by Locke and others, concerning a stage of nature and the social compact. In this we cannot altogether agree with him. The state of society contemplated by Rousseau, in which mankind lived together without government, may never have existed, and it is of no consequence whether it did so or not. The question is not whether it ever existed, but whether there is any advantage in supposing it hypothetically; as we assume in argument all kinds of cases which never occur, in order to illustrate those which do. All discussions respecting a state of nature are inquiries what morality would be if there were no law. This is the real scope of Locke's Essay on Government, rightly understood; whatever is objectionable in the details did not arise from the nature of the inquiry, but from a certain wavering and obscurity in his notion of the grounds of morality itself. Nor is this mode of viewing the subject, we conceive, without its advantages, in an enlarged view, either of morality or law. Not to mention that, as is observed by Locke himself, all independent *governments*, in relation to one another, are actually in a state of nature, subjects to moral duties but obeying no

common superior; so that the speculations which Mr. Lewis despises, tend, in international morality at least, to a direct practical application.

Even the social compact (though a pure fiction, upon which no valid argument can consequently be founded), and the doctrine connected with it, of the inalienable and imprescriptible rights of man, had this good in them, that they were suggested by a sense, that the power of the sovereign, although, of course, incapable of any legal limitation, has a moral limit, since a government ought not to take from any of its subjects more than it gives. Whatever obligation any man would lie under in a state of nature, not to inflict evil upon another for the sake of good to himself, that same obligation lies upon society towards every one of its members. If he injure or molest any of his fellow-citizens, the consequences of whatever they may be obliged to do in self-defense, must fall upon himself; but otherwise, the government fails of its duty, if on any plea of doing good to the community in the aggregate, it reduces him to such a state, that he is on the whole a loser by living in a state of government, and would have been better off if it did not exist. This is the truth which was dimly shadowed forth, in howsoever rude and unskillful a manner, in the theories of the social compact and of the right of man. It was felt, that a man's voluntary consent to live under a government, was the surest proof he could give of his feeling it to be beneficial to him; and so great was the importance attached to this sort of assurance, that where an express consent was out of the question, some circumstance was fixed upon, from which, by stretching a few points, a consent might be presumed. But the test is real, where, as in imperfectly settled countries, the forest is open to the man who is not contented with his lot.

Notwithstanding the length to which our remarks have extended, we cannot overlook one or two passages, less

remarkable for their importance, than as proofs of the haste with which Mr. Lewis must have examined the authors and even the passages he has criticised.

Thus, where Mr. Bentham recommends *natural* procedure in the administration of justice, in opposition to *technical*, Mr. Lewis observes, that as it is impossible to suppose that any mode of judicial procedure should be left to the discretion of the judge guided by no rules, the word *natural*, in this case, "seems to be a vague term of praise, signifying that system which, to the writer, seems most expedient." It shows but little knowledge of Mr. Bentham's habits of mind, to account in *this* way of all others for any phraseology he may think proper to adopt. The fact is, as has been explained a hundred times by Mr. Bentham himself, that by *natural* procedure, he means what he also calls *domestic* procedure; viz., the simple and direct mode of getting at the truth which suggests itself *naturally*,—that is readily and invariably, to all men who are inquiring in good earnest into any matter which, happening to concern *themselves*, they are really desirous to ascertain. That the technical methods of our own, and all other systems of law, are bad in proportion as they deviate from this, is what Mr. Bentham affirms, and, we will add, proves.

Again, when Mr. Mill speaks of the *corruptive operation* of what are called the advantages of fortune, Mr. Lewis comments upon the strangeness of this sentiment from the writer of a treatise on Political Economy; that is, on the production and accumulation of wealth; and hints, that the work in question must have been composed with an object similar to that of a treatise on poisons. Did it never occur to Mr. Lewis, that Mr. Mill's meaning might be, not that a people are corrupted by the amount of the wealth which they possess in the aggregate, but that the inequalities in the distribution of it have a tendency to corrupt those who obtain the large masses, especially when these come to them by

descent, and not by merit, or any kind of exertion employed in earning them?

To add one instance more, Mr. Lewis falls foul of the often quoted sentence of Tacitus, "that the most degenerate states have the greatest number of laws; *in corruptissima republica plurimae leges*; a position not only not true, but the very reverse of the truth, as the effect of the progress of civilization is to multiply enactments, in order to suit the extended relations, and the more refined and diversified forms of property, introduced by the improvement of society." Mr. Lewis is a scholar, and understands the *words* of Tacitus, but, in this case it is clear, he has not understood the ideas. He has committed what he himself would call an *ignoratio elenchi*. By a corrupt society, Tacitus (we will take upon ourselves to assert) did not mean a *rude* society. The author was speaking of the decline of a nation's morality, and the critic talks to you of the improvement of its industry. Tacitus meant, that, in the most *immoral* society, there is the most frequent occasion for the interposition of the legislator; and we venture to agree with him thinking it very clear that the less you are able to rely upon conscience and opinion, the more you are obliged to do by means of the law—a truth which is not only not the opposite of Mr. Lewis' position, but stands in no logical relation to it at all, more than to the binomial theorem.

These are the blemishes of Mr. Lewis' work. Yet they do not induce us to qualify our high opinion, both of the book and of its author. It is an able, and a useful publication; only, it is not a sufficient dissertation on the use and abuse of the leading political terms.

We have often thought, that a really philosophical Treatise on the Ambiguities of the Moral Sciences would be one of the most valuable scientific contributions which a man of first-rate intellectual ability could confer upon his age, and upon posterity. But it would not be so much a book of

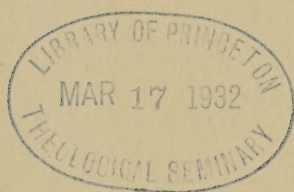
criticism as of inquiry. Its main end would be, not to set people right in their use of words, which you never can be qualified to do, so long as their *thoughts*, on the subject treated of, are in any way different from yours; but to get at their thoughts through their words, and to see what sort of a view of truth can be got, by looking at it in their way. It would then be seen, how multifarious are the properties and distinctions to be marked, and how few the words to mark them with, so that one word is sometimes all we have to denote a dozen different ideas, and that men go wrong less often than Mr. Lewis supposes, from using a word in many senses, but more frequently from using it only in one, the distinctions which it serves to mark in its other acceptations not being adverted to at all. Such a book would enable all kinds of thinkers, who are now at daggers-drawn, because they are speaking different dialects and know it not, to understand one another, and to perceive that, with the proper explanations, their doctrines are reconcilable; and would unite all the exclusive and one-sided systems, so long the bane of true philosophy, by placing before each man a more comprehensive view, in which the whole of what is affirmative in his own view would be included.

This is the larger and nobler design which Mr. Lewis should set before himself, and which, we believe, his abilities to be equal to, did he but feel that this is the only task worthy of them. He might thus contribute a large part to what is probably destined to be the great philosophical achievement of the era, of which many signs already announce the commencement: viz., to unite all half-truths, which have been fighting against one another ever since the creation, and blend them in one harmonious whole.

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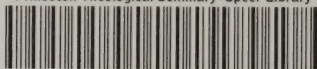
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